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**The Dissertation Committee for Nicole Renee Cunningham Certifies that this is the
approved version of the following dissertation:**

**The Influence of Team and Athlete Identification on Sport Consumer
Behavior and Fan Response to Negative Information**

Committee:

Matthew S. Eastin, Supervisor

Vincent J. Ciccirillo

Anthony Dudo

Emily Sparvero

Gary Wilcox

**The Influence of Team and Athlete Identification on Sport Consumer
Behavior and Fan Response to Negative Information**

by

Nicole Renee Cunningham, B.A., B.S., M.S.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my furry companions Horry and Penny who stayed by my side every step of the way and never let me pull an all-nighter alone.

Also, to my parents, Ernie and Janie Cunningham, without the inspiration, drive, and support that they have given me, I might not be the person I am today.

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The Influence of Team and Athlete Identification on Sport Consumer Behavior and Fan
Response to Negative Information

Nicole Renee Cunningham, Ph.D.
The University of Texas at Austin, 2016

Supervisor: Matthew S. Eastin

Relatively few studies, compared with team identification, examine athlete identification. Furthermore, studies that include athlete identification define it as an extension of team identification and treat it as simply another point of attachment for fans. However, with the increase of media coverage focusing on athletes' personal lives off-the-field as much as their performance on the field, as well as athletes curating and maintaining their personal social media accounts, it is possible for sport consumers to be a fan of an athlete without sharing the same psychological connection for the athlete's team.

This dissertation contributes to our understanding of fan identification as it applies to not only sport teams, but also athletes. First, Study 1 provided evidence that while team and athlete identification can supplement each other, they can be discrete constructs. This study was a necessary first step in exploring how team and athlete identification differ in terms of predicting the attitudes and behaviors of sport consumers. Second, Study 2 tested how various levels of team and athlete identification influence how sport consumers respond to negative information about the team or athlete. Prior

research in sport management and marketing literature largely overlook the influence of athlete identification. Moreover, there also remains limited empirical research examining the direct impact of negative information and sport scandals on the team- and athlete-related consumer behavior of sport consumers. Findings from Study 1 provide evidence that team and athlete identification predict different attitudes and behaviors and support the need to incorporate athlete identification, in addition to team identification, in future research. Findings from Study 2 contribute to research on the impact of negative information and scandals with evidenced-based support that sport consumers with various levels of team and athlete identification respond differently to negative information involving the team or athlete.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Research Problem

Much research in the sport management literature has focused on the development of fan identification and its effect on sport consumer behaviors, such as increased game attendance, ticket sales, and apparel sales. However, research has largely disregarded athlete identification, defined here as the individuals' perception of the relationship between themselves and specific athletes, as its own unique predictor. Prior research posits that identification with an athlete is merely an extension of team identification (Robinson, Trail, & Kwon, 2004; Trail, Anderson, & Fink, 2000). The rise of social media, however, has allowed athletes to curate and maintain their own brand identities by sharing and posting about their lives on- and off-the-field while also directly interacting with fans (Cunningham & Bright, 2012). This allows fans to develop a psychological connection with the specific athlete without also sharing the same degree of psychological connection with the athlete's team. As such, it is possible that team and athlete identification can have distinct effects on sport consumer attitudes and behaviors.

Furthermore, the rise of social media has also led to an escalation in publicized scandals (Poniewozik, 2014; Somaiya, 2015). Whether an athlete leaves for another team via free agency, is traded to another team, released from his contract or arrested for an offense, sport fans are constantly reacting to the decisions of teams and behaviors of athletes. While the goal of any sport organization is to build and maintain a loyal fan base, it is important to understand the influence team and athlete identification has on a

sport consumer's response to negative situations, as well as the subsequent impact on attitudes toward the team and athlete and consumer behaviors.

Contribution to Research

The current studies seek to determine the impact that psychological connection with a team and athlete has on sport consumer attitudes and consumer behavior. While prior research has viewed athlete identification as an extension of the larger concept of team identification, this research contributes to sport management literature by viewing athlete identification as a unique predictor separate from team identification. As such, study one seeks to extend the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) by applying it to a novel sport-object yet to be examined – the athlete. In applying the PCM to investigate psychological connection with an athlete, the purpose of study one is to determine how and when team and athlete identification differ in terms of predicting sport-related attitudes and behaviors.

Moreover, research also has yet to examine the impact of dissonance on attitude and sport consumer behavior. Whereas study one focused on how team and athlete identification operate differently, study two furthers this contribution by examining how these differing psychological connections impact perceived dissonance resulting from negative information about the team and athlete and whether this influences fans' evaluation of the team, athlete, and behavioral intentions. In addition to continuing to extend the PCM to include athlete identification, study two will also utilize Cognitive Dissonance Theory in an attempt to determine if and when fans decrease their support for a team or athlete as a result of various situations.

Objectives of the study

The objective of these studies is to better understand how team and athlete identification operate as unique predictors, as well as their role in determining how sport consumers respond to negative information regarding off-the-field behavior (e.g. drugs, domestic violence) and common sport industry practices (e.g. free agency, trades, contract release). By understanding how and when team and athlete identification differ, sport marketers will be better able to understand and target various segments of sport consumers through marketing campaigns or crisis management plans when faced with a controversy.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review begins with a discussion of identification as concept and its application to identification with a team. The second section extends identification to include athletes and provides an explanation as to why athlete identification should be its own unique concept and construct. The fourth and final section focuses on the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) as a theoretical framework. This section provides the historical context of the theoretical framework for this study, as well as detailing the conceptualization and development for each level of the PCM. An analysis of the four stages – Awareness, Attraction, Attachment, and Allegiance – is then provided.

IDENTIFICATION

In sport research, identification is often viewed as a key determinant of fan loyalty (Sloan, 1989). Identification is defined as “an orientation of the self in regard to other objects including a person or group that results in feelings or sentiments of close attachment” (Trail et al., 2000, pp. 165-166). Theoretically, Social Identity Theory (SIT) is often utilized to explain the relationship between loyalty and identification (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). According to SIT, individuals possess two types of identity: personal and social. Personal identity includes distinctive attributes (e.g. abilities), while social identity comprises significant group categories (e.g. organizational membership) (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Individuals tend to identify with a group that holds attributes similar to their own self-concept, which leads them to commit themselves to actions that support the group (Cornwell & Coote, 2005). Thus, within the sport context, identification plays a

significant role in influencing sport consumers to engage in recurring behavior such as frequently attending games or purchasing team apparel (Trail, Fink, & Anderson, 2003; Wann & Branscombe, 1993).

Team Identification

In addition to identification, there is also *team* identification. Team identification is defined as the individuals' perception of the relationship between themselves and the sport team, even considering the successes and failures of the team as their own personal experiences (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Researchers have demonstrated that team identification influences fan loyalty (Wann & Branscombe, 1993), and has a positive impact on a fan's consumption intention (Fisher, 1998; Fisher & Wakefield, 1998). When sport consumers are highly identified with a team, they express their support by attending the team's games even during a low performing season (Wakefield & Sloan, 1995). Behavioral tendencies influenced by identification often lead to other positive outcomes, such as increased game attendance (Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Hill & Green, 2000; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995) and the intention to purchase team apparel (Kwon, Trail, & James, 2007). Furthermore, Mahony, Nakazawa, Funk, James, and Gladden (2002) also found that high team identification is necessary for fans to return and continue the relationship with the team.

Athlete Identification

Compared to team identification, relatively few studies examine athlete identification. Studies that include athlete identification define it as an extension of team identification (Robinson et al., 2004; Trail et al., 2000) and treat it as simply another

point of attachment for fans (Mahony et al., 2002; Robinson & Trail, 2005; Trail, Robinson, Dick, & Gillentine, 2003). Trail et al. (2000) defined athlete identification as the orientation of the self toward another person which results in close attachment. Thus, athlete identification is the individuals' perception of the relationship between themselves and specific athletes and the consideration of the successes and failures of the athletes as their own personal experiences. It is assumed that, much like team identification, athlete identification can also impact a fan's consumer behavior. Mahony et al. (2002) claimed that attachment to a favorite athlete can be strong and may influence fan behavior. For example, an increase in ticket sales is often attributed to star athletes in professional basketball and baseball in the United States (Gladden & Funk, 2002).

Previous studies have also revealed that a more intense attachment to a specific individual leads to consequences that are favored by organizations, such as preventing consumer defections (Liljander & Strandvik, 1995). Other studies have found that intense attachment also predicts brand loyalty and willingness to pay (Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005). In an attempt to increase the current state of knowledge pertaining to athlete identification, this study seeks to incorporate athlete identification and examine its impact on attitude and behavioral intentions.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTINUUM MODEL

Studying the psychological connection of sport consumers is essential in understanding their continued sport involvement. Despite countless typologies constructed to classify sport consumers, research on sport consumers lacked a theoretical framework to guide understanding of the underlying social-psychological processes

explaining an individual's movement from one level of fandom to another. Funk and James (2001) were the first to construct a more theoretical derived model called the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM). The PCM segments sport consumers into four psychographic levels (i.e., awareness, attraction, attachment, and allegiance) with the purpose of accounting for an individual's movement from initial awareness of a team or athlete to eventual allegiance (Funk & James, 2001).

The PCM provides an extended view of sport consumer involvement and outlines parameters that mediate the relationship between an individual and a sport or team. The PCM framework accounts for an individual's movement through initial awareness to eventual allegiance of a sport or team (Funk & James, 2001). However, rather than using tiers or discrete dichotomies, the PCM uses incremental stages. Funk and James (2001) proposed that sport consumers move through four stages of sport and team identification. The initial stage is labeled "awareness." This ground floor level denotes when an individual first learns that certain sports, and/or teams exist, but does not have a favorite team. At this level, individuals have little commitment or interest in the sport and/or team. The second stage, labeled "attraction," indicates when an individual recognizes having a favorite sport and/or team based upon several social-psychological and demographic-based motives. At this stage, consumers use sport as an escape from the routines of daily life. Thus, sport consumers at this stage are attracted to a sport and/or team because it provides entertainment and excitement. However, sport consumers on this level do not strongly identify with the team. The third stage is known as "attachment." It is at this level where a psychological connection begins to develop by

creating varying degrees of association between the sport consumer and the sport object (e.g. sport and/or team). Attachment signifies the strength of association based upon the perceived importance attached to the psychological and physical aspects associated with the sport or team (Funk & James, 2001). Individuals at this stage have a strong attachment and have developed a more stable connection with the sport or team. They also have invested more time and emotional energy into team activities. The final stage, known as “allegiance,” contains sport consumers who have become loyal or committed fans of the sport or team. Individuals at this stage have the most passionate level of commitment. At this level, sport consumers give high priority to loyalty. This is demonstrated by incorporating the team image into their sense of self. They also tend to spend more time reading about the team, engage in discussion with other fans, and attend more games.

History, Development, and Evolution

It was not until 2001 that a theoretical framework was constructed specifically for sport management research (Funk & James, 2001). Because the theory is still relatively new compared to other theories with lengthy, influential backgrounds (e.g. cognitive dissonance theory, social identity theory) that were first proposed decades ago, the PCM has a rather short history and has just begun to influence additional research.

Developed for sport management research, the PCM seems to have been influenced by other academic disciplines as it shares similarities with models such as the Hierarchy of Effects Theory, stages of adoption, and escalating commitment. However, the focus of these models is on the outcome of desired behavioral changes, whereas the

PCM focuses on the psychological relationship an individual may form with a sport object (e.g., team or athlete) and identifies the different factors believed to influence the formation of a strong connection relative to a sport object. Based on the Hierarchy of Effects Theory (Palda, 1966) and the escalating commitment theory (Staw, 1976), the PCM examines an individual's movement from a low to a high psychological connection related to a specific sport activity or team. The strength of the PCM lies in its ability to segment sport consumers into four psychographic segments.

Awareness

The first stage of the PCM suggests that sport and teams exist and individuals develop awareness of them through close family, friends, peers and/or institutions in their environment. According to Barnett (2005), awareness is considered the first significant step in the decision-making context. An individual is unable to participate in an activity if he/she is not aware of the opportunity. Several researchers have investigated the impact of external factors such as media, family, friend, and peers on individual awareness of and attitude towards activities not yet engaged in (Courneya, Plotnikoff, Hotz, & Birkett, 2001; Gilbert, 2001; McDonough & Crocker, 2005; Parr & Olsin, 1998; Srinivasan, O'Fallon, & Dearry, 2003). Results indicate an individual's perceived and desired identities of a specific object are created by these socializing influences (Moschis, 2007; Vignoles, Manzi, Regalia, Jemmolo, & Scabini, 2008).

Awareness may generate varied responses, meaning an individual may become aware of the existence of a particular sport, team, sport, or player but have little interest in it (Funk & James, 2001). How and when individuals are introduced to this level is

crucial, with past research finding that family and friends, in particular, are a significant factor in promoting awareness. Lewko and Greendorfer (1977) found that fathers play a primary role at this initial stage by introducing their children to a sport or team. This begins to shape their interest in games and activities. As sport socialization research suggests, how one creates knowledge about a sport team is the basis for creating awareness (Funk & James, 2001).

Attraction

The attraction process illustrates how personal, psychological and environmental determinants lead to preferences and emotional results and interact with awareness outcomes. Personal determinants (e.g. gender, age, education, race, and ethnicity) encourage or discourage desire for involvement in a certain activity (Recours, Souville, & Griffet, 2004). Conversely, psychological determinants such as hedonic needs can lead to experimental-based interests (Beard & Ragheb, 1983) and environmental determinants (Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck, & Watson, 1992). Moreover, social situational contexts (Crompton & McKay, 1997) can provide reasons for people being attracted to particular recreational experiences.

The second level of the PCM demonstrates a developed attitude or distinct interest towards a sport object, which is thought to result from the psychological features of the social situation and hedonic motives. Although it is primarily a psychological connection, it is at this level that individuals may first begin to attach increased meaning to an activity. In examining the motivation of sport consumers for attending and/or watching games, sport consumer behavior is reached when individuals develop an interest in a

particular team based upon various psychological and physical features. For example, moving to a new community may influence an individual to begin liking a local team because he or she wants to “fit in” and support the home team. Once the individual begins making new friends, supporting the team may no longer be important. Moreover, various forms of advertising that promote specific attributes and benefits of the sport product (e.g., entertainment, an opportunity to escape) may influence an individual’s choice of a favorite sport or team (Cobb-Wallgren, Ruble, & Donthu, 1995). Thus, an individual may be attracted to a team due to the benefits offered (e.g. discount ticket packages, promotions) or hedonic motives toward the aesthetic quality of sport (e.g. attending a University of Texas football game is a fun, enjoyable experience) (Funk & James, 2001, 2006). However, at the attraction level, individuals do not yet strongly identify with a team or player. A more stable psychological connection to a sport or team develops in the next stage.

Attachment

A person has reached the level of attachment when he or she has formed a stable psychological connection to a sport or team. Funk and James (2001) argue that attachment is based more on intrinsic than extrinsic processes. In contrast to attraction, attachment refers to the degree to which physical and psychological features (i.e., attributes and benefits associated with a team such as success, star player, identification, community pride) take on internal psychological meaning (Gladden & Funk, 2001). Attachment is differentiated from attraction by the extent to which certain mental associations link to a sport or team are intrinsically important (Funk & James, 2001). In

his study on attachment, Buchanan (1985) introduced the concept of continuance as a component of the complexity and stability of the connection between an individual and a sport or team, a logical development as it suggests internal psychological meaning shown by the attributes and benefits associated with a team (Gladden & Funk, 2001).

According to Stewart, Humphries, and Smith (2005), identification is a significant component of a fan's development of a psychological or emotional connection with a team. Extending the work of Stewart et al. (2005), Fink, Trail, and Anderson (2002) concluded that the strongest motivator is "gleaning personal worth" through first connecting and then engaging with a particular team. Thus, identification can be defined as "the sense of oneness with or belongingness to a team" (Matsuoka, Chelladurai, & Harada, 2003, p. 246) or the extent to which an individual feels a psychological commitment to a specific team (Wann & Branscombe, 1995). Most of the variance in sport fan satisfaction and behavioral intentions has been examined in the context of identification. The results suggest it is an antecedent to sport fan satisfaction, perception, or behavioral intention (Laverie & Arnett, 2000; Trail et al., 2000).

With regard to the level of identification, highly committed fans are more likely to attend more games and spend additional income on team merchandise to reinforce their identification with a specific team. Funk and James (2001) supported this conclusion by demonstrating the importance of the psychological level and of the hierarchical progression from attraction to attachment. Attachment develops as a self-concept when memories of a team strengthen. Moreover, attachment maintains the internal links between it and one's attitude and beliefs. The attachment process provides three types of

meaning which control the transition from attachment to allegiance: (1) emotional, (2) functional, and (3) symbolic, to activities, controlling the transition from attachment to allegiance (Funk & James, 2006). Here, research suggests these meanings may result from the self-developmental concepts of individuation, integration, and temporal orientation (Gibson, Willming, & Holdnak, 2002; Schultz, Kleine, & Kernan, 1989). Therefore, a fan uses sports as a means to motivate personal values, beliefs, and commitment.

Although the attachment process is complex, it is evident that as sport consumers increase participation, the stronger and more stable the psychological connection with teams becomes, thus reducing the impact of other influences (Funk & James, 2001). In fact, several studies have shown that participation leads to more personalized meaning. In turn, this leads to more stable and predictable behavior (Anderson, 2004; Sheeran & Orbell, 2000; P. M. Wilson, Rodgers, Fraser, & Murray, 2004).

The attachment level is a more complex, but stable psychological connection compared to attraction. And, individuals at the attachment level are more likely to remain stable in a changing environment than people at the attraction level. However, at the attachment stage, the psychological connection is still not as strong as that in the allegiance level.

Allegiance

The final stage of the PCM, labeled allegiance, includes individuals who exhibit passionate or highly enthusiastic levels of commitment. This concept has been defined as “the range of all those elements which induce citizens to give their loyalty to institutions

of governance, which whether national, international or supranational” (Milward, 1997, p. 11). Allegiance, which is also characterized by persistence and resistance to change, has an impact on cognitive processes and behavior (Funk & James, 2001). For this reason, allegiant fans have highly formed connections to a particular team, as well as attitudes that strengthen their psychological involvement.

Moreover, this attitude toward a team is internalized with other values, self-concepts, and behavior, which become an integral part of a person’s identity. A strong psychological commitment is not only based on the success of a favorite team, but also on the benefits gained through personal experience. Therefore, allegiance is more stable, resistant, and influenced less by emotion than attachment. Previous research has found that allegiance is the strongest connection to psychological attachment, consumer behavior, and repeat consumption (Backman & Crompton, 1991). At the allegiance level, individuals also have a psychological connection that responds quickly and without awareness, as well as a complex influence on information processing and consumer behavior (Pritchard, Havitz, & Howard, 1999). Additionally, individuals at the allegiance level have a resistance to change over time (Pritchard et al., 1999). For example, as individuals incorporate sport into their behavior and value systems, they tend to spend more time watching sport games, reading sport-related news, following players, and engaging in conversations about sport with other fans.

Though the PCM offers a strong theoretical framework for analyzing the four stages involved in an individual’s psychological development toward supporting a specific team, it has one major limitation. As pointed out by Funk and James (2001), the

PCM cannot entirely clarify the factors that mediate the progress among the four stages of Awareness, Attraction, Attachment, and Allegiance. Thus, the PCM cannot completely illustrate the developmental progression toward allegiance. In response to this limitation, Funk and James (2006) proposed the revised PCM, which includes modifications to the conceptual foundations of the original model by including both the processes and the level-based hierarchical outcomes.

THEORETICAL EXTENSION OF PCM

While research applying the PCM has focused largely on psychological connection with a team (Yoon, 2013) or sport (Beaton, Funk, & Alexandris, 2009; Jeon, 2012; Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2004; Kyle & Mowen, 2005), it has yet to be applied to an athlete. To this end, investigating psychological connection with an athlete is a novel application of the PCM. In doing so, these studies will contribute to building a more complete picture of sport consumer behavior in terms of how it is influenced by two unique concepts – psychological connection with a team and psychological connection with an athlete.

Chapter 3: Study One

STUDY ONE METHODS

The following chapter describes the methodology completed for study one. Regression analysis was used to determine how psychological connection to both the team and athlete impact attitude and consumer behaviors.

Hypotheses

H1: Psychological connection with the (a) team and (b) athlete is a positive predictor of attitude toward the team.

H2: Psychological connection with the (a) team and (b) athlete is a positive predictor of attitude toward the athlete.

H3: Psychological connection with the (a) team and (b) athlete is a positive predictor of sport-related consumer behavior.

H4: Psychological connection with the (a) team and (b) athlete is a positive predictor of purchase intention of athlete-related apparel.

Participants

As stated, participants were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). MTurk is a crowdsourcing marketplace that allows for a heterogeneous sample of participants to be recruited for online activities (Ross, Irani, Silberman, Zaldivar, & Tomlinson, 2010). This convenient sample pool has been validated as a reliable source of

participants for social science study (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010). Based on an examination of the best practices on MTurk, the compensation rate was established at 20 cents. To be eligible for this study, participants were required to be in the United States, have an acceptance rate of 75% or greater, and be at least 18 years old. Additionally, participants were asked to select their favorite sport from the following list: (1) professional football (NFL), (2) professional basketball (NBA), (3) professional baseball (MLB), (4) professional hockey (NHL), (5) professional soccer (MLS), or (6) Other. Participants who selected “Other” were dismissed from the questionnaire and not compensated.

The final sample included 434 participants. Participants ($n = 434$) ranged in age from 18 to 75 years old ($M = 36.13$, $SD = 11.28$). Over half (61%) were male and the remainder female. Participants self-reported as white (77%), African American (9%), Hispanic (7%), Asian (5%), and Other (2%). Education levels included those with high school diplomas (10%), technical training (5%), some college (31%), bachelor’s degrees (36%), master’s degrees (15%), and professional or doctorate degrees (3%).

Procedure

Participants were able to access the study as a Human Intelligence Task (HIT) on the MTurk marketplace. After accepting the HIT, participants began by clicking on the link to the online questionnaire and reading a consent form. The decision to continue the questionnaire served as consent in this study. Participants were asked to select their favorite sport from the following list: (1) professional football (NFL), (2) professional basketball (NBA), (3) professional baseball (MLB), (4) professional hockey (NHL), (5)

and professional soccer (MLS). Based on their selection, participants were provided with a list of teams in the sport and league they chose and asked to select their favorite. For example, if the participant selected “professional football (NFL),” he would be given a list of all 32 NFL teams to choose from. Participants were also asked to provide the name of their favorite player currently on the team’s roster. Using the information provided, participants completed items to assess their psychological connection to the team and athlete they selected. Following, participants were randomly assigned to one of the three between-subject conditions. Participants were assigned to either the team-centric, athlete-centric, or neutral scenario using the team and athlete they selected. Following the scenario, participants completed items to assess one’s perceived level of dissonance, their attitude toward the team and athlete, and behavioral intentions, including attending games in-person, watching games on television, purchasing team and athlete apparel, and demographics.

Independent Variable Measures

Psychological Connection with Team

Psychological connection is defined as the mental association between an individual and a sport-related object; in this case, a sport team (Funk & James, 2001). Psychological connection with the team was assessed using thirteen, seven-point Likert items (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree) adapted from Kyle et al. (2004) and Kyle and Mowen (2005). Items included: “My favorite team is important to me,” “I enjoy my favorite team,” “Being a fan of my favorite team has a central role in my life,” and

“Being a fan of my favorite team gives others a glimpse of the type of person I am” ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 1.01$, $\alpha = .91$).

Psychological Connection with Athlete

Similar to psychological connection with team, psychological connection with the athlete is defined as the mental association between an individual and a sport-related object; in this case, an athlete on his or her favorite team (Funk & James, 2001).

Psychological connection with the athlete was assessed using thirteen, seven-point Likert items (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree) adapted from Kyle et al. (2004) and Kyle and Mowen (2005). Items included: “My favorite athlete is important to me,” “I enjoy my favorite athlete,” “Being a fan of my favorite athlete has a central role in my life,” and “Being a fan of my favorite athlete gives others a glimpse of the type of person I am” ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 1.10$, $\alpha = .93$).

Dependent Variable Measures

Attitude toward the Team

Attitude refers to one’s cognitive and affective orientations with respect to some stimulus object or behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Thus, attitude towards the team is defined as the participant’s overall evaluation of the sport team. The measure of attitude toward the team used an established five-item, seven-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree) operationalized by Milliman, Fugate, and Rahim (1991). Participants were asked to select the option that best represented how they felt about team

with regards to professional ability, reputation, general impression, trust, and likability ($M = 5.72$, $SD = 1.25$, $\alpha = .94$).

Attitude toward the Athlete

Attitude towards the athlete refers to the participant's overall evaluation of the athlete. Five Likert-type items measured one's attitude toward the athlete (Milliman et al., 1991). Items assessed how participants felt about the athlete with regards to professional ability, reputation, general impression, trust, and likability, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) ($M = 5.93$, $SD = 1.09$, $\alpha = .92$).

Sport Spectator Consumer Behavior

The measure of sport spectator consumer behavior used an established four-item, seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = Never, 7 = Always) operationalized by Trail and James (2001). Items included: "I will attend the team's games in-person," "I will tune into the team's games through television, radio, the internet, or other media," and "I will purchase the team's licensed merchandise," and "I will talk with others about my association with the team" ($M = 5.62$, $SD = 1.14$, $\alpha = .77$).

Purchase Intention of Athlete-Related Apparel

The measure of the intention to purchase athlete-related apparel used a validated four-item, seven-point semantic differential scale operationalized by Bruner and Hensel (1994). Purchase intention is a personal action tendency relating to the brand (Bagozzi & Burnkrant, 1979; Ostrom, 1969). Here, the intentions are distinct from attitude since attitudes are summary evaluations, whereas intentions represent "the person's motivation

in the sense of his or her conscious plan to exert effort to carry out a behavior” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 168). Therefore, purchase intention is defined as the person’s willingness to purchase a product in the future (Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Doh & Hwang, 2009; Kumar & Benbasat, 2006; M. Lee & Youn, 2009). Purchase intention consisted of the following anchors: unlikely/likely, probably not/probably, uncertain/certain, definitely would not/definitely would ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 2.01$, $\alpha = .98$).

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 was used to analyze the data. Multiple Regression was used to test the hypotheses and research question.

STUDY ONE RESULTS

A standard multiple regression analysis was performed between the independent variables (psychological connection to the team and psychological connection to the athlete) and the dependent variables (attitude toward the team, attitude toward the athlete, and sport spectator consumer behavior). The demographic variables of gender and age, as well as favorite sport, were entered into block 1 as control variables.

H1-H2: Predicting Attitude

Supporting H1_a, the data indicate that psychological connection to the team ($\beta = 0.16$, $p < .05$) and athlete ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < .05$) were significant predictors of attitude toward the team. Overall, the regression explained a significant amount of variance ($F(5,428) = 11.88$, $p < .05$, $R = 0.35$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.11$).

H2 focused on attitude toward the athlete. While psychological connection to team was not a significant predictor of attitude toward the athlete ($\beta = 0.02, p > .05$), psychological connection to the athlete was a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.25, p < .05$). The regression analysis explained a significant amount of variance ($F(5,428) = 10.36, p < .05, R = 0.33, \text{Adjusted } R^2 = 0.10$). Therefore, H2 was partially supported.

H3-H4: Predicting Behavioral Intentions

H3 examined psychological connection and sport spectator consumer behavior. Here, data indicate that psychological connection to the team ($\beta = 0.47, p < .05$) was a significant predictor of sport spectator consumer behavior. However, psychological connection to the athlete was not a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.09, p > .05$). Overall, the regression explained a significant amount of variance ($F(5,428) = 34.62, p < .05, R = 0.54, \text{Adjusted } R^2 = 0.28$). Thus, H3 was partially supported.

Finally, H4 focused on the intent to purchase athlete-related apparel. While psychological connection to team was not a significant predictor of purchase intention ($\beta = 0.06, p > .05$), psychological connection to the athlete was a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.49, p < .05$). The regression analysis explained a significant amount of variance ($F(5,428) = 37.98, p < .05, R = 0.55, \text{Adjusted } R^2 = 0.30$). Therefore, H4 was partially supported.

	Unstandardized		Standardized		
Predictor Variables	B	SE B	β	R	Adjusted R ²
Block 1				.16	.02
Gender	.35	.12	.14**		
Age	.01	.01	.07		
Favorite Sport	.01	.05	.01		
Block 2				.35	.11
Gender	.31	.12	.12**		
Age	.01	.01	.09		
Favorite Sport	.03	.04	.03		
Psychological connection to team	.19	.08	.16*		
Psychological connection to athlete	.21	.07	.18**		

Table 3.1: Regression Predicting Attitude toward the Team

	Unstandardized		Standardized		
Predictor Variables	B	SE B	β	R	Adjusted R²
Block 1				.20	.03
Gender	.22	.11	.10*		
Age	.02	.01	.15**		
Favorite Sport	.06	.04	.07		
Block 2				.33	.10
Gender	.17	.10	.08		
Age	.02	.00	.17**		
Favorite Sport	.07	.04	.09		
Psychological connection to team	.02	.07	.02		
Psychological connection to athlete	.25	.06	.25**		

Table 3.2: Regression Predicting Attitude toward the Athlete

	Unstandardized		Standardized		
Predictor Variables	B	SE B	β	R	Adjusted R ²
Block 1				.10	.00
Gender	.12	.11	.05		
Age	-.01	.01	-.05		
Favorite Sport	.06	.04	.07		
Block 2				.54	.28
Gender	.11	.10	.05		
Age	-.00	.00	-.04		
Favorite Sport	.09	.04	.11**		
Psychological connection to team	.52	.07	.47**		
Psychological connection to athlete	.09	.06	.09		

Table 3.3: Regression Predicting Sport Spectator Consumer Behavior

	Unstandardized		Standardized		
Predictor Variables	B	SE B	β	R	Adjusted R ²
Block 1				.17	.02
Gender	.27	.20	.07		
Age	-.03	.01	-.16**		
Favorite Sport	-.07	.07	-.05		
Block 2				.55	.30
Gender	.11	.17	.03		
Age	-.02	.01	-.12**		
Favorite Sport	-.02	.06	-.01		
Psychological connection to team	.11	.11	.06		
Psychological connection to athlete	.89	.10	.49**		

Table 3.4: Regression Predicting Purchase Intention of Athlete-Related Apparel

STUDY ONE DISCUSSION

Prior research has primarily focused on team identification (Funk & James, 2006; Kwon & Trail, 2003; J. S. Lee & Kang, 2015; Luellen & Wann, 2010; Mahony, Madrigal, & Howard, 2000; Mahony et al., 2002; Moyer, Pokrywczynski, & Griffin, 2015; Trail & James, 2001; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995; Wann & Branscombe, 1993; S. M. Wilson, Grieve, Ostrowski, Mienaltowski, & Cyr, 2013) and largely disregarded athlete identification as a discrete construct and predictor of attitude and behavior. However, the current research determined that team and athlete identification function as discrete predictors of attitude and behavioral intentions. Therefore, it is possible for an individual to identify more as a fan of the athlete than with the team. Turning first to H1, both psychological connection to the team and athlete uniquely and significantly predicted a positive attitude toward the team. Thus, team and athlete identification work conjointly in terms of predicting attitude toward the team. Therefore, the more an individual identifies with the team, the more likely they are to have a positive attitude toward the team. Similarly, the more an individual identifies with the athlete, the more they are likely to have a positive attitude toward the athlete's team. When examined together with regards to attitude toward the team, this confirms prior research which suggested athlete identification is an extension of team identification (Robinson et al., 2004; Trail et al., 2000) and that athlete is another point of attachment for fans (Mahony et al., 2002; Robinson & Trail, 2005; Trail, Robinson, et al., 2003). Future research should focus on identifying factors contributing to an individual's attitude toward the team when that individual is highly identified with a particular athlete on the team; for example, athlete

performance, athlete's contribution to the team, athlete's playing time, overall team performance, and the strength of the association between the athlete and his team.

This study also focused on predicting consumer behaviors related to the team and athlete. As predicted, psychological connection to the team significantly predicted sport spectator consumer behavior. However, psychological connection to the athlete did not significantly predict sport spectator consumer behavior. It is, however, important to note that sport spectator consumer behavior focused primarily on behaviors that applied to the sport team as a whole. Thus, if an individual is a highly identified fan of the sport team, then, of course, they will attend games, watch the team on television, and purchase licensed team apparel. However, if an individual highly identifies with a specific athlete on the team, it cannot be assumed that this will drive the individual to engage in the team-related consumer behaviors. For example, if an individual is a fan of Cincinnati Bengals quarterback Andy Dalton, this is not enough to encourage the individual to attend Bengals games, watch Bengals games on television, or purchase Bengals team merchandise. This contradicts Mahony et al. (2002) who claimed that attachment to a favorite athlete can be strong and influence fan behavior as well as Carlson and Donovan (2013) who argued that athlete identification increases the purchase of team-related paraphernalia. Psychological connection to the athlete was not enough to influence fan behavior as it relates to the team as a whole, but it did significantly predict the intention to purchase athlete-related apparel (e.g. jerseys, t-shirts, branded sneakers). However, psychological connection to the team did not predict the purchase of athlete-related

apparel. Therefore, highly identified fans of a team are more likely to engage in behaviors involving the team, but not when individual behaviors relate to a specific athlete.

Limitations and Future Research

The findings of the current study suggest several implications for better understanding how team and athlete identification function together and discretely. Team and athlete identification can be used in future studies to continue the examination of how they can complement each other or work individually, specifically in terms of behavioral differences. While this particular study indicates the need for more research in this area, there were limitations to this study. First, due to this study's connection to the Psychological Continuum Model, psychological connection to the team and athlete was measured using items developed by Kyle et al. (2004) and adapted by Kyle and Mowen (2005). While these items have been used in past studies (Beaton et al., 2009; Kyle et al., 2004; Kyle & Mowen, 2005) to test the PCM, they have been primarily applied to studies focusing on psychological connection as involvement in sport participation and active leisure rather than with a team or athlete. While the psychological connection measures were adapted for this study, future research should consider additional measures, such as the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (Wann & Branscombe, 1993) and Psychological Commitment to Team scale (Mahony et al., 2000), which may be better suited for examining psychological connection with a team or athlete. Additionally, the construct used to measure Sport Spectator Consumer Behavior incorporated four team-related behaviors (game attendance, watching games on television, purchasing team apparel, and talking about the team with others). However, the only specific athlete-related behavior

measured was the purchase intention of athlete-related apparel. Thus, comparing team-related behaviors and athlete-related behaviors is unbalanced and should be reconciled in future research through additional athlete-specific measures for behavior. Moreover, this study allowed participants to select their favorite sport, favorite team from the sport selected, and asked for them to provide the name of their favorite athlete on that team. Therefore, this study examined athlete and team identification through different sports, teams, and athletes. Future research should be pared down to focus on one sport, one team, and one athlete for consistency. This is addressed in Study 2, which concentrates only on the Houston Texans (NFL) and defensive end JJ Watt.

This particular study established that individuals vary in team and athlete identification, and that team and athlete identification function differently depending on the situation. As a result, study 2 will focus on how these different psychological connections impact how individuals respond to negative information involving the team and athlete.

Chapter 4: Literature Review II

This literature review begins with a discussion of common business practices executed by sport organizations and athlete scandals off-the-field. The second section focuses on the impact of negative information and the spillover effect on consumer behavior. The fourth and remaining section provides a discussion and analysis of cognitive dissonance before concluding with a discussion of attitude change and resistance among sport consumers.

BUSINESS OF SPORTS

On July 8, 2010, ESPN broadcast live an hour-long, highly anticipated television special titled *The Decision*. During this program, National Basketball Association (NBA) player LeBron James announced he would be signing with the Miami Heat. James was an unrestricted free agent after playing seven seasons for the Cleveland Cavaliers, where he was named a two-time NBA Most Valuable Player (MVP) and a six-time All-Star. James grew up in nearby Akron, Ohio. Within hours of James' announcing he would "take [his] talents to South Beach and join the Miami Heat," disgruntled Cavaliers fans took to the streets of Cleveland to express their disappointment, going as far as burning James' jersey. In fact, fans in Cleveland were so upset over James' departure that they considered it a betrayal that ranks only second to "The Move" when Art Modell relocated the Cleveland Browns to Baltimore in 1996 (McHugh, 2011). History repeated itself again in 2014 when James announced he would be leaving the Miami Heat to return to the Cleveland Cavaliers. Similar to Cavaliers fans before them, Miami Heat fans were

visibly upset as they burned their jerseys and defaced murals featuring James (Newport, 2014).

It is evident from the previous example that sport fans become heavily invested in their favorite teams and players, however, sports organizations are also businesses. Decisions are made not only with the fans (consumers) in mind, to maximize profit, but also to win games. Sport organizations are typically divided into two discrete and often conflicting branches – team operations and business operations. The goal of the team operations branch is to win games and championships by assembling the best and most competitive squad possible. This branch includes players, coaches, team management (e.g. General Manager), scouts, and athletic trainers. The business operations branch focuses on business-related matters such as finance, broadcast, marketing, community relations, and facilities management. The goal driving this branch is to grow fan interest in the team and maximize profit. Because the goals of these branches differ, they are often placed in conflict with each other. Team management will trade players to other teams for better opportunities (e.g. other players, draft picks, money); they may also trade or release players in an attempt to rid themselves of troublesome distractions in the locker room (de la Rosa, 2015). These decisions are often made without considering the impact these transactions have on fans or business operations. For example, marketing campaigns are often constructed around a star player or group of players to increase fan interest and ticket sales. These marketing campaigns become obsolete when team management trades a star player to another team or the player leaves via free agency. Organizations may see a decrease in ticket sales when the player leaves the team. In fact,

following James' departure, the Cavaliers dropped from second in total attendance in 2010 to 19th by the 2012 season (ESPN, 2010). Though, it was the franchise value of the Cavaliers that took the brunt of the impact, dropping 26 percent in value in 2011 (Forbes, 2011), with another seven percent drop in 2012 (Guarini, 2012). However, Cleveland's loss was Miami's gain as the Heat immediately benefited from the move. The value of Heat season tickets on the secondary market nearly tripled within 24 hours after James' announcement, jumping from \$3,238.61 to \$8,249.99 (Talalay, 2010). However, four years later when James announced he would return to Cleveland, the Cavaliers had all but sold out of season tickets (Rovell, 2014a). In fact, the Cavaliers sold approximately one million dollars in season tickets the night before James' announcement based only on speculation alone that he would return (Rovell, 2014c).

The reality of the sport industry is that the movement of players – whether through trade, free agency, or waivers – is a common occurrence. However, sport teams are commercially-oriented organizations dependent on fans to drive profit. There is, however, limited empirical evidence examining how these team-centric actions impact sport consumer behavior. Thus, in order to better understand how team-centric actions create dissonance among fans, empirical examination is needed to further explore how attitudes and behavioral intentions of sport consumers are impacted. Therefore, this study will examine how sport consumers respond to dissonance caused by team-oriented actions, as well as the subsequent impact on attitudes and behavioral intentions.

ATHLETE SCANDALS

While athletes exploring free agency offers, being released or traded to other teams spur reactions from fans, off-the-field behavior by athletes and the subsequent response by the team have also been known to cause strong reactions from fans. From murder convictions (Candiotti, Dolan, & Sanchez, 2015), domestic violence (Bien, 2014) and child abuse allegations (Zinser, 2014), to drug and alcohol use (Fowler, 2015a, 2015b) and performance-enhancing drugs (Weaver, 2014), athletes are no strangers to scandalous off-the-field behavior.

For example, in February 2014, Ray Rice, formerly of the Baltimore Ravens, was arrested for a physical altercation with his then girlfriend Janay Palmer. A few days later, a video showing Rice Palmer's unconscious body from an elevator at an Atlantic City casino surfaced. Rice received a two game suspension, but received support from the team's owner, general manager, and head coach, saying Rice would be returning to the team (Bien, 2014). In September 2014, a full version of the video was released, showing Rice punching Janay. That same day, the Ravens released Rice from his contract and he was suspended indefinitely by the NFL. Rice appealed the suspension and was reinstated in November (Bien, 2014).

The Ravens experienced financial ramifications as a result of the Rice incident. Following the release of the full video, the Ravens announced the team would offer fans the opportunity to exchange their Ray Rice jerseys at its stadium stores, a move similar to that of the New England Patriots following the arrest of Aaron Hernandez for murder (Rovell, 2014b). In the 2013 season, Rice had the 28th bestselling jersey in the league

(Rovell, 2014b). Nearly 8,000 Rice jerseys were exchanged for those of other Ravens players, which were estimated to have cost the Ravens organization between \$600,000 and \$800,000 (Hensley, 2015). Additionally, there has been an overall decline of female NFL fans in the past two years, correlating with repeated domestic violence incidents involving NFL players (SBRNet, 2015b). Similarly, the NFL also experienced a 6% decrease in total apparel sales from 2013 to 2014, giving the NFL its lowest total in over three years (SBRNet, 2015a).

As with any organization or brand, scandals loom not only as a threat to image and reputation, but also to profitability. For example, as seen in the Ray Rice scandal, there has been a noticeable decrease in female viewers. However, the aforementioned situations are merely a sample of events, decisions, and transactions that have caused strong opinions and feelings among disgruntled or disappointed fans. Yet despite the ubiquitous nature of athlete scandals and anecdotal evidence, there remain little empirical research examining sport and athlete scandals.

Hughes and Shank (2005), who defined a sport scandal as an event that is “illegal or unethical, involved multiple parties over a sustained period of time, and whose impact affected the integrity of the sport with which they are associated (p. 214),” explored sport scandals from the perspectives of corporate sponsors and media representatives. They argued that there are four characteristics that influence individuals’ perceptions regarding the impact of a sport scandal: (1) level of sport, (2) gender of the athlete, (3) performance implications, and (4) an association with the sport or entity involved in the scandal (Hughes & Shank, 2005). With regards to the level of sport, Hughes and Shank (2005)

found that individuals hold higher expectations in terms of maturity and sport integrity for professional athletes than amateur athletes. Therefore, individuals have a lower tolerance for scandals at the professional level than those that involve amateur athletes. Additionally, the gender of the athlete was also found to have a significant impact on attitude toward the sport scandal in that gender differences in sport media coverage produce dissimilarities among the media coverage surrounding scandals involving male and female athletes. Therefore, sport scandals involving male athletes are viewed as more severe than those involving female athletes. Moreover, the researchers also discovered that an individual's attitude toward sport scandals was significantly influenced by whether or not the events involved in the scandal was believed to impact athletic performance and/or the integrity of the sport (Hughes & Shank, 2005). Hughes and Shank (2005) also found that an individual's association with the sport or entity involved in the scandal impacted their attitude toward the scandal. According to Hughes and Shank (2005), an association refers to "the extent to which a respondent feels close to either an athlete or a sport which may be influenced by things such as prior experience or degree of familiarity in the sport or organization which is being impacted by the negative information (p. 214)." Therefore, individuals with an association to the entity or sport were initially restrained in their evaluation of the scandal; however, as the scandal progressed, the individuals experienced a greater sense of betrayal by those involved in the scandal. While considered an exploratory study, the findings provide support for the argument that an individual's attitude toward a scandal is significantly impacted when the

events involve an entire sport entity, such as a sport league or team, versus a single party (e.g. a specific athlete).

Building on the work of Hughes and Shank (2005), Fink, Parker, Brett, and Higgins (2009) examined how unscrupulous off-field behaviors of athletes and the subsequent managerial response by the organization impacted sport fans' team identification. The researchers concluded that unscrupulous off-field behavior by athletes and the managerial response impact sport fans, specifically those characterized by a high level of team identification. Furthermore, Fink et al. (2009) found that unscrupulous off-field behavior that was followed by a weak managerial response had a greater negative effect on individuals with high team identification than unscrupulous off-field behavior that was followed by a strong managerial response. Thus, the researchers concluded that unscrupulous off-field behavior with a weak managerial response negatively affects team identification.

It is, however, important to note that the study conducted by Fink et al. (2009) focused on a single dependent variable – team identification. Thus, additional research is needed on how athlete-centric sport scandals impact attitudes and sport consumer behavioral intentions. Therefore, this study will examine how sport consumer's respond to athlete-centric sport scandals and the subsequent impact on sport consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions.

IMPACT OF NEGATIVE INFORMATION

Negativity Effect

Referred to as the negativity effect, researchers argue that individuals attribute higher values to negative information than to positive information in the overall evaluation of an entity (Fiske, 1980; Klein, 1996). Similarly, the negativity effect has also been shown to influence the perceptions or evaluations of other people (Herr, Kardes, & Kim, 1991; Wright, 1974). Prior research has argued that the negativity effect emerges as a result of positive expectations individuals have of others (Ahluwalia, 2002; Klein & Ahluwalia, 2005). For example, Klein and Ahluwalia (2005) posit that positive expectations compel individuals to underestimate the value of positive information when negative information is present. Moreover, due to disproportionate effects on persuasion, research has shown that when individuals evaluate an entity, negative attributes are more salient than positive attributes (Ahluwalia, Burnkrant, & Unnava, 2000; Ahluwalia, Unnava, & Burnkrant, 2001).

Spillover Effect

In order to better understand the role negative information has on sport consumers, one must also consider the “spillover effect.” Ahluwalia et al. (2001) define the spillover effect as “the extent to which a message influences beliefs related to attributes that are not contained in the message,” (p. 458). Thus, the spillover effect can be applied to explain the process by which an individual’s attitude toward one entity is transferred to an associated entity (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). For example, a sport consumer who learns that an athlete with a troubled past involving multiple domestic

abuse allegations was signed by a team, the sport consumer may conclude that the sport team excuses such behavior. Similarly, if an athlete admits to using performance-enhancing drugs, the sport consumer may believe that the sport team condones the use of such drugs. Thus, if the sport consumer's perceptions of the sport team are altered despite the sport team not being explicitly mentioned in the information (e.g. news article, news clip, social media), then it can be said that the athlete has "spilled over" to the sport team. Although the spillover effect can occur in both negative and positive contexts (Simonin & Ruth, 1998), the persuasiveness of negative information may cause difficulties for the associated entities; in this case, the sport team. Thus, it is crucial to understand the impact negative information or sport events may have on sport consumer behavior and, ultimately, sport teams.

Negative Information and Spillover Effect in Sports

Prior research examining the negativity and spillover effects in the sport context has focused on corporations associated with athlete endorsers involved in a scandal. For example, Till and Shimp (1998) found that negative information or events involving athlete endorsers has a negative impact on the corporations' product evaluations. Similar research discovered that negative information involving athlete endorsers also has a negative influence on corporate image (Louie & Obermiller, 2002) and financial performance (Louie, Kulik, & Jacobson, 2001). Furthermore, research on the negativity and spillover effects has also focused on larger, collective entities, such as academic institutions. For instance, research on negative events or scandals in collegiate athletics found that institutions that receive sanctions from the NCAA for rule violations suffer

from a decline in alumni donations (Grimes & Chressanthis, 1994; Rhoads & Gerking, 2000), incoming student applications (Goff, 2000), and overall student enrollment (Hughes & Shank, 2008).

While prior research has provided empirical evidence on the impact of negative information and the spillover effect, it is important to understand the extent to which an individual's psychological connection to a team or athlete influences how they respond to negative information or events involving the team or athlete.

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

Dissonance

Festinger (1957) theorized that when an individual holds two or more elements of knowledge that are relevant to each other, but inconsistent with one another, a state of discomfort is created. He referred to this unpleasant state as "dissonance." Dissonance theory examines inconsistency among cognitions to describe how beliefs and behavior change attitudes. In this view, dissonance is the motivational state caused by the inconsistency. For example, if an individual believes that texting and driving at the same time causes car accidents, but he continues to send and read text messages while driving, the individual is left open to cognitive dissonance. Similarly, within a sport-context, dissonance may be caused if an individual is a fan of the Washington Redskins football team, but finds the reference to Native Americans to be racist. Festinger (1957) posited that individuals are motivated by increased levels of dissonance and will subsequently engage in psychological work to reduce the inconsistency. This work will typically be oriented around supporting the cognition most resistant to change.

Researchers posited that dissonance causes an aversive state of arousal (Elliot & Devine, 1994; Fazio & Cooper, 1983; Gaes, Melberg, & Tedeschi, 1986; Losch & Cacioppo, 1990; Zanna & Cooper, 1974). Therefore, if the individual thinks about the inconsistency between texting while driving and knowing it causes accidents, the individual will likely become uncomfortable and tense. The individual will experience a drive to reduce the arousal or discomfort, and as a result, rearrange cognitions to reduce dissonance. The individual could also theoretically change his behavior to reduce dissonance; however, most research has focused on situations in which inconsistent cognitions are more likely to change (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). This is a result in the shift in research methodology investigating the cognitive processes, rather than outcome, which plagued early studies (Fiske & Taylor, 2013).

Reducing Dissonance

One of the most common ways of reducing dissonance is through a change in attitude. Attitude change is expected to be in the direction of the cognition that is most resistant to change (Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2007). Some of the cognitions may be consonant with the behavior (e.g. I am a Redskins season ticket holder), while other cognitions may be dissonant (e.g. the team name is racist; it is disrespectful to a culture). Cognitive inconsistency results when the number of dissonant cognitions outweighs the consonant ones. This may cause the individual to experience dissonance. Cognitions can be changed to reduce dissonance. First, cognitions can be added or subtracted to increase the ratio of consonant to dissonant cognitions. For example, the individual may add the cognition of having already spent money on purchasing season tickets and subtract the

cognition that the team name is disrespectful to a culture. This would result in more consonant cognitions than inconsonant, which would result in a reduction of dissonance. A second method involves reducing the importance of the dissonant cognitions through selective perception, which suggests individuals will avoid information that increases dissonance. In other words, individuals favor information that is consistent with their preexisting attitudes and behaviors.

Dissonance as a Motivated Process

As the dissonance research matured, researchers (Bem, 1972; Tedeschi, Schlenker, & Bonoma, 1971) began to question whether the outcomes from dissonance were due to motivation. Bem (1972), argued the effects were a result of non-motivational cognitive processes, while others posited they were due to impression management concerns (Tedeschi et al., 1971). Subsequent studies confirmed that dissonance is, in fact, a motivated process (for reviews, Harmon-Jones, 2000b, 2000c). That is, during a state of dissonance, individuals experience heightened electrodermal activity, which is linked to activation of the sympathetic nervous system (Elkin & Leippe, 1986; Harmon-Jones, Brehm, Greenberg, Simon, & Nelson, 1996) and report increased negative affect (Elliot & Devine, 1994; Harmon-Jones, 2000a). Once cognitive discrepancy is reduced and attitude change occurs, self-reported negative affect is also reduced (Elliot & Devine, 1994; Harmon-Jones, 2000a). Additionally, studies using the misattribution paradigm reveal that discrepancy reduction is motivated by the need to reduce negative affect (Zanna & Cooper, 1974). Thus, Harmon-Jones (2012) argues that negative affect occurs as a result of cognitive dissonance. Negative affect also creates a motivation to engage in

dissonance-reducing activities, which strongly suggests that dissonance reduction is a motivated process.

This study seeks to investigate the role of cognitive dissonance as an internal process experienced by sport consumers as a result of negative sport-related situations, such as an athlete being traded or being caught in a scandal. Moreover, this study will examine whether cognitive dissonance predicts dissonance-reducing activities in the form of decreased consumer behaviors, such as attending or watching fewer games and purchasing less apparel.

Chapter 5: Study Two

STUDY TWO METHODS

Study Design

This study used a 4 (psychological connection) x 3 (scenario) between subjects experimental design to investigate the role of dissonance on sport consumer behavior. This study was designed to demonstrate that a) psychological connection to a team or athlete impacts the degree of perceived dissonance experienced as a result of a negative event and 2) dissonance experienced impacts subsequent sport consumer behavior. Individuals exposed to negative events involving the team or athlete may respond to the information in a way that decreases their intention to attend games, watch games on television, or purchase team and athlete apparel.

The first factor, psychological connection, will be a manipulated variable for the level of involvement with the team or athlete, while the second manipulated factor, negative information involving the team or athlete will serve as the source of dissonance for the treatment conditions. Individuals shown the news clips will be primed through the use of a confederate who validates the event's occurrence; however, individuals shown the "neutral" news clip will serve as the comparison group.

Hypotheses

H1: The focus of the news clip will have an effect on perceived dissonance, where the athlete-centric news clip will cause the greatest dissonance followed by the team-centric and neutral news clips.

H2: The focus of the news clip will have an effect on attitude towards the team, where the team-centric news clip will have the greatest negative effect followed by the athlete-centric and neutral news clips.

H3: The focus of the news clip will have an effect on attitude towards the athlete, where the athlete-centric news clip will have the greatest negative effect followed by the team-centric and neutral news clips.

H4: The focus of the news clip will have an effect on sport spectator consumer behavior, where the team-centric news clip will have the greatest negative effect followed by the athlete-centric and neutral news clips.

H5: The focus of the news clip will have an effect on the intention to purchase athlete-related apparel, where the athlete-centric news clip will have the greatest negative effect followed by the team-centric and neutral news clips.

H6: Those with an attraction-based psychological connection will experience greater dissonance than those with an attachment-based, awareness-based, and allegiance-based psychological connection. And, those at the attachment level will experience greater dissonance compared to those aware of the team and allegiant to the team. Those allegiant to the team will experience less dissonance than those aware of the team.

H7: Those with an allegiance-based psychological connection will have the most positive attitude toward the (a) team and (b) athlete than those with an attachment-based, attraction-based, and awareness-based psychological connection. And, those at the attachment level will have a greater positive attitude compared to those that are attracted to and aware of the team and athlete. Those with an attraction-based psychological connection will have a stronger positive attitude than those who aware of the team and athlete.

H8: Those with an allegiance-based psychological connection will be the most likely to engage in sport spectator consumer behavior than those with an attachment-based, attraction-based, and awareness-based psychological connection. And, those at the attachment level will be more likely to engage in sport spectator consumer behavior than those that are attracted to and aware of the team. Those with an attraction-based psychological connection will be more likely to partake in sport spectator consumer behavior than those who are aware of the team.

H9: Those with an allegiance-based psychological connection will be the most likely to purchase athlete-related apparel than those with an attachment-based, attraction-based, and awareness-based psychological connection. And, those at the attachment level will be more likely to purchase athlete-related apparel than those that are attracted to and aware of the team. Those with an attraction-based psychological connection will be more likely to purchase athlete-related apparel than those at the awareness level.

RQ1: What impact do the four segments of psychological connection to the athlete (Allegiance, Attachment, Attraction, and Awareness) have on attitude toward the (a) team and athlete?

RQ2: What impact do the four segments of psychological connection to the athlete have on (a) sport-related consumer behavior and (b) purchase intention of athlete-related apparel?

Scenario Conceptualization and Operationalization

Given the stimuli are based on recent sport-related headlines and involve a real NFL team and athlete, it is impossible to have a true control in this study, and thus, the reference group should be referred to as a comparison group (Thorson, Wicks, & Leshner, 2012). Individuals in the comparison group viewed a news clip with a neutral-to-positive storyline that involved a common business practice in the sport industry (e.g. contract extension) that is typically viewed as positive by the team's fan base. Individuals in the team-centric condition were shown a news clip that focused on a negative action executed by the team (e.g. releasing a star athlete). The second treatment group was shown a news clip that focused on a negative event involving the athlete (e.g. admitting to using performance enhancing drugs and being suspended by the NFL).

For this study, the news clips featured the Houston Texans and JJ Watt. Due to the study's use of participants from the State of Texas, which will be discussed in more detail later, the Houston Texans and its most profitable athlete, JJ Watt, were selected as the subjects for the news clips (Prunty, 2016).

The news clips used in this study were created using the same production process and style that local news stations use for their own broadcasts. To enhance the credibility of the clips, a retired news anchor with 33 years of experience was hired to deliver the stories on air. In addition to using a High Definition (HD) camera for filming, all three clips used also chroma keying, a production technique frequently used in the broadcast news industry. The chroma keying technique makes a color range in the foreground transparent, which allows for a static image to be inserted into the scene. Thus, all three videos were filmed with the anchor in front of a “green screen.” The virtual set, which included the anchor desk, background, and graphic monitors, was then inserted into the video using a computer located in the Master Control Room. The virtual set chosen also included a graphic monitor to the left of the news anchor, which appeared as a horizontal television set with a blank screen. Again, using a computer in the Master Control Room, a “Breaking News” graphic was dropped into the graphic monitor. Due to the anchor’s experience and familiarity with the news production process and product, the anchor used the same tone, pace, and delivery style, commonly seen and heard on local news broadcasts, across all three videos. With the exception of the specific scenario mentioned in the scripts, the scripts used the same language for all three news stories. Between the anchor’s consistent delivery style and the similarity of the language and structure used in the three scripts, each video was approximately the same length and ranged from 50 to 53 seconds. Once filming was completed, the television crew added the same video of JJ Watt to all three news clips and at the same point in the scripts. Thus, all three news clips adhered to the same production cues and in the same order: (1) anchor on cam, (2) cut to voiceover (VO) with JJ Watt video, (3) cut back to anchor on cam, (4) cut to voiceover (VO) with JJ Watt video, (4) cut back to anchor, and (6) fade to back. For scripts, see Appendices B-D.

Figure 5.1: Virtual Set



Pretest 1: Team and Athlete Selection

A pretest was conducted with participants ($n = 43$) to initially determine which team and athlete would be used for the experiment. Participants were students enrolled in an advertising course at a large public university in the Southwestern region of the United States. Participants in this pretest ranged in age from 20 to 39 ($M = 22.74$, $SD = 2.94$) and over half (51%) were female. Participants were informed that participation in the study was completely voluntary and were offered extra credit for completing the survey. After consent, participants were randomly assigned to answer items about Dallas Cowboys and wide receiver Dez Bryant or the Houston Texans and defensive end JJ Watt. It is important to note that a three-prong approach was taken for the selection of the two National Football League (NFL) teams used in the pretest and experiment: (1) the 2015-2016 season had recently ended, (2) other major sports (e.g. professional basketball,

hockey, baseball) were either in the middle of its current season (NBA, NHL) or had recently started a new season (MLB), and (3) the university's location allowed for better access to Dallas Cowboys and Houston Texans fans. Moreover, Dez Bryant and JJ Watt were selected as the representative athlete from each team based on their popularity and profitability. According to the National Football Players Association (NFLPA), Bryant was the most profitable athlete on the Dallas Cowboys, while Watt was the most profitable on Houston Texans during the 2015-2016 season (Prunty, 2016). The list, which is published by NFL Players, Inc, the marketing and licensing subsidiary of the players' union, is based on total sales of officially licensed merchandise.

Once assigned to either the Dallas Cowboys and Dez Bryant or the Houston Texans and JJ Watt items, participants rated the team and athlete using nine seven-point Likert items. The nine items assessed psychological connection with the team and athlete with ratings of agreement – strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) – for opinions that the team or athlete (1) elicited positive affect by the participant, (2) were central to the participant's life, and (3) provided opportunities for self-expression for the participant Kyle and Mowen (2005). Five seven-point Likert-type items assessed attitudes toward the team and athlete on the following criteria: (1) professional ability, (2) reputation, (3) general impression, (4) trust, and (5) likeability – using a scale ranging from extremely bad (1) to extremely good (7) developed by Milliman et al. (1991). Finally, the likeability of the individual athletes were measured using four, seven-point semantic differentials (Whittler & DiMeo, 1991). Items included: (1) cold/warm, (2) unlikeable/likeable, (3) insincere/sincere, and (4) unfriendly/friendly.

The researcher conducted independent samples t-test analyses to determine if there were significant differences in the Houston Texans / JJ Watt combination or Dallas Cowboys and Dez Bryant combination. Findings indicated that, with the exception of

attitude toward the athlete, there were no significant differences between the two groups (see Table 4.1). This suggested that neither combination was rated too high or too low when compared to each other. The researcher then used descriptive statistics to select the team and athlete combination that provided the most variance and a normal distribution. The purpose of this was to avoid floor or ceiling effects caused by heavily skewed measures if an athlete or team was measured too high or too low. Therefore, it was determined that the Houston Texans and JJ Watt would be the subjects used in the experiment stimuli.

	Dallas Cowboys and Dez Bryant		Houston Texans and JJ Watt				
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i>
Psychological connection with team	3.05	.95	2.88	1.16	1.66	41	ns
Psychological connection with athlete	3.33	.94	3.39	.70	.37	41	ns
Attitude toward team	3.11	1.34	3.24	.83	-.28	41	ns
Attitude toward athlete	3.08	.95	2.48	1.13	2.19	41	< .05
Athlete likeability	3.57	.85	3.15	1.10	1.55	41	ns

Table 5.1: Pretest 1 Means, Standard Deviations, and T-Test Results.

Pretest 2: Scenario Selection

Though the scenarios were based on recent sport headlines, a pretest was needed to determine which of the team- and athlete-centric scenarios resulted in the most variance. Thus, all scenarios were pretested for perceived dissonance. The first set, which was the team-centric scenarios, focused on common business practices conducted by sport organizations. These scenarios included the athlete leaving the team by: (1) free-agency, (2) being traded, and (3) being released by the team. The second set were athlete-centric, and included the athlete: (1) admitting to using performance-enhancing drugs, (2) being arrested for domestic violence on his significant other, (3) being arrested for the drugging and raping of a 21-year-old female he met at a bar, (4) being arrested for sexually abusing several young boys, including inappropriate touching, raping, and showering with the young boys, and (5) being arrested for child abuse.

Participants ($n = 32$) ages 20 to 29 ($M = 22.44$, $SD = 1.61$) were recruited from an advertising course at a large public university in the Southwestern region of the United States. Over half (59%) of the participants were female. Participants were informed that participation in the study was completely voluntary and were offered extra credit for completing the survey.

After consent, participants were asked read the short-form team- and athlete-centric scenarios and rate their sense of discomfort for perceived dissonance on a three-item, seven-point scale (1 = Not At All, 7 = Extremely). Perceived dissonance items assessed if the participant felt “uncomfortable,” “uneasy,” and “bothered” by the scenario (Elliot & Devine, 1994). Descriptive statistics used to examine the variance of each potential scenario. This allowed the researcher to select the scenario with the most normal distribution and avoid floor or ceiling effects caused by heavily skewed measures. As a result, it was determined the team-centric event would be the Houston Texans releasing

JJ Watt and athlete-centric event would be JJ Watt admitting to using performance enhancing drugs (PEDs) and his subsequent suspension.

	M	SD
Team – Free Agency	2.29	1.55
Team – Released by Team	2.99	1.91
Team – Traded by Team	2.59	1.75
Athlete – Performance-Enhancing Drugs	4.45	2.29
Athlete – Arrested for Domestic Violence	5.96	1.51
Athlete – Arrested for Raping and Drugging Female	6.71	.85
Athlete – Arrested for Sexually Abusing Children	6.76	.75
Athlete – Arrested for Child Abuse	6.37	1.42

Table 5.2: Pretest 2 Means and Standard Deviations.

Pretest 3: Stimuli

A third pretest was conducted with participants ($n = 30$) after the stimuli were created to ensure the stimuli had the desired effect on dissonance and attitudes. Participants were recruited from advertising courses at a large public university in the Southwestern region of the United States. Participants were predominantly female (57%) and ranged in age from 19 to 23 ($M = 20.81$, $SD = 1.12$).

Participants were randomly assigned to view either the team-centric, athlete-centric, or neutral news clip. The same measure for perceived dissonance from pretest two was used.

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted for perceived dissonance ($F(2,18) = 16.84$, $p < .05$). Data indicate that those in the athlete-centric condition ($M = 4.24$, $SD = .66$) were significantly different from those in the team-centric ($M = 2.05$, $SD = 1.28$) and neutral conditions ($M = 1.33$, $SD = .88$). Descriptive and inferential statistics for pretest three are shown in Table 4.3. Thus, findings from the significance test indicate that the stimuli had the desired effect on perceived dissonance.

Participants

Participants were recruited from various advertising courses at a large public university in the Southwestern region of the United States. Participants were informed that participation in the study was completely voluntary and were offered extra credit for completing the survey. After participants were eliminated through the manipulation check, the final sample included 149 participants. Participants were between the ages of 19 and 37 ($M = 21.65$, $SD = 2.00$). More than half (51%) of the participants were female. Participants reported themselves as white (44%), Hispanic (15%), African American (7%), Asian (31%), and Other (3%). Education levels for highest degree or level of

school included: high school diplomas (7%), some college (64%), bachelor's degrees (27%), master's degrees (2%).

Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions in the 4 x 3 experiment with as many as four participants participating in a single session. Prior to participation in the study, potential participants were asked to sign up for a study on second-screen use and media multi-tasking. When the participants arrived for their session, they were asked to wait in the laboratory waiting room where they joined by the confederate posing as another participant. Once the session commenced, participants, including the confederate, were escorted to individual experiment rooms where they completed a consent form and a questionnaire focusing on their psychological connection to the Houston Texans and JJ Watt. When the participants reached the halfway mark of the questionnaire, they were instructed to meet the researcher in the viewing room. Once the participants and confederate were all present, they were informed by the researcher that there had been a change of plans and the focus of the study was now based on breaking news that occurred overnight. The confederate asked the researcher "if this was regarding JJ Watt". When researcher confirmed that it was about JJ Watt, the confederate claimed he had heard about it earlier that morning and read a story about it. The researcher asked the confederate not to spoil the news for the other participants and proceeded to show the news clip to all of the participants in the room. Once the news clip ended, the confederate mentioned that he had seen the news clip earlier. For the complete script, see Appendix B. Following, participants were instructed to return to their

individual rooms where they completed the remainder of the questionnaire which focused on perceived level of dissonance, their attitude toward the team and athlete, as well as behavioral intentions, including attending Houston Texans games in-person, watching Houston Texans games on television, purchasing Houston Texans and JJ Watt-related merchandise, demographics, and a manipulation check. Once the questionnaire was completed, the researcher conducted a manipulation check to confirm the effectiveness of the stimuli and study design. Participants were asked if they knew the true nature of the study. Those who answered “yes” were removed from the study ($n = 3$). After the manipulation check, participants were debriefed on the experiment and stimuli.

Independent Variable Measures

Psychological Connection with Team

Psychological connection is defined as the mental association between an individual and a sport-related object; in this case, a sport team (Funk & James, 2001). Psychological connection with team was assessed using a multidimensional construct on three facets: Pleasure, Sign, and Centrality (Kyle et al., 2004; Kyle & Mowen, 2005). Pleasure is defined as the positive affect elicited from being a fan of the sport team ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 1.62$, $\alpha = .95$), whereas Sign refers to the extent to which being a fan of the sport team provides opportunities for self-expression ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.32$, $\alpha = .76$). Centrality indicates how central the sport team is to an individual's life ($M = 1.80$, $SD = 1.19$, $\alpha = .76$). Each subscale contained three items, each of which presented an associated statement. Responses were measured on seven-point Likert scales (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree). Participants were assigned to PCM stages using

the staging algorithm developed by Beaton et al. (2009). Mean scores were calculated for Pleasure, Sign, and Centrality, after which each score was classified as being high (H), medium (M), or low (L). These classifications were used to create an involvement profile for each participant (e.g., Pleasure = H; Sign = M; Centrality = L). Participants were then assigned to a PCM stage based upon this profile. See Figure 1 for detailed breakdowns of the profiles that correspond to each stage.

Awareness			Attraction			Attachment			Allegiance		
*P	C	S	P	C	S	P	C	S	P	C	S
*L	L	L	M	L	L	L	L	M	M	H	H
			H	L	L	L	L	H	H	H	M
						L	M	L	H	M	H
						L	M	M	H	H	H
						L	M	H			
						L	H	L			
						L	H	M			
						L	H	H			
						M	L	M			
						M	L	H			
						M	M	L			
						M	H	L			
						M	M	M			
						M	M	H			
						M	H	M			
						H	L	M			
						H	M	L			
						H	M	M			
						H	L	H			
						H	H	L			

*: P=Pleasure Facet; C=Centrality Facet; S=Sign Facet

Figure 5.2: Theoretical Distribution of Involvement across PCM Stages (Beaton, Funk, Alexandris, 2009).

Psychological Connection with Athlete

Similar to psychological connection with team, psychological connection with the athlete is defined as the mental association between an individual and a sport-related object; in this case, an athlete on his or her favorite team (Funk & James, 2001).

Psychological connection with athlete was also assessed using the same multidimensional construct developed by Kyle et al. (2004) and adapted by Kyle and Mowen (2005).

Pleasure is defined as the positive affect elicited from being a fan of the sport team ($M = 4.79$, $SD = 1.55$, $\alpha = .96$), whereas Sign refers to the extent to which being a fan of the sport team provides opportunities for self-expression ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.39$, $\alpha = .81$).

Centrality indicates how central the sport team is to an individual's life ($M = 1.69$, $SD = 1.06$, $\alpha = .98$). Each subscale contained three items, each of which presented an associated statement. Responses were measured on seven-point Likert scales (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree). Participants were assigned to PCM stages using the staging algorithm developed by Beaton et al. (2009). Mean scores were calculated for Pleasure, Sign, and Centrality, and then classified as being high (H), medium (M), or low (L). These classifications were used to create an involvement profile for each participant (e.g., Pleasure = H; Sign = M; Centrality = L). Participants were then assigned to a PCM stage based upon this profile.

Dependent Variable Measures

Perceived Dissonance

Dissonance, which is defined as the degree of psychological discomfort, was used to measure cognitive dissonance following the scenario. Adapted from Elliot and Devine

(1994), the scale includes three Likert-type items, including uncomfortable, uneasy, and bothered (1 = Very Slightly or Not at All, 5 = Extremely) ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 1.63$, $\alpha = .91$).

Attitude toward the Team

Attitude refers to one's cognitive and affective orientations with respect to some stimulus object or behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Thus, attitude towards the team is defined as the participant's overall evaluation of the sport team. The measure of attitude toward the team used an established five-item, seven-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree) operationalized by Milliman et al. (1991). Participants were asked to select the option that best represented how they felt about team with regards to professional ability, reputation, general impression, trust, and likability ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 1.17$, $\alpha = .91$).

Attitude toward the Athlete

Attitude towards the athlete refers to the participant's overall evaluation of the athlete. Five Likert-type items measured one's attitude toward the athlete (Milliman et al., 1991). Items assessed how participants felt about the athlete with regards to professional ability, reputation, general impression, trust, and likability, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) ($M = 5.52$, $SD = 1.37$, $\alpha = .92$).

Sport Spectator Consumer Behavior

The measure of sport spectator behavior used an established four-item, seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = Never, 7 = Always) operationalized by Trail, Fink, et al. (2003). Items included: "I will attend the team's games in-person," "I will tune into the

team's games through television, radio, the internet, or other media," and "I will purchase the team's licensed merchandise," and "I will talk with others about my association with the team" ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 1.89$, $\alpha = .95$).

Purchase Intention of Athlete-Related Apparel

The measure of the intention to purchase athlete-related apparel used a validated four-item, seven-point semantic differential scale operationalized by Bruner and Hensel (1994). Purchase intention is a personal action tendency relating to the brand (Bagozzi & Burnkrant, 1979; Ostrom, 1969). Intentions are distinct from attitude since attitudes are summary evaluations, whereas intentions represent "the person's motivation in the sense of his or her conscious plan to exert effort to carry out a behavior" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 168). Therefore, purchase intention is defined as the person's willingness to purchase a product in the future (Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Doh & Hwang, 2009; Kumar & Benbasat, 2006; M. Lee & Youn, 2009). Purchase intention consisted of the following anchors: unlikely/likely, probably not/probably, uncertain/certain, definitely would not/definitely would ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 1.88$, $\alpha = .93$).

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 was used to analyze the data. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Tukey post hoc analyses were used to test hypotheses 1-9 and research questions 1-2.

STUDY TWO RESULTS

An analysis of variance was performed between the independent variables (psychological connection to the team and conditions) and the dependent variables (attitude toward the team, attitude toward the athlete, sport spectator consumer behavior, and purchase intention).

H1: Effect of Negative Information on Dissonance

Supporting H1, data indicate the focus of the news clip significantly impacted perceived dissonance ($F(2,149) = 17.15, p < .05$). Tukey post hoc analysis determined that, as predicted, those in the athlete-centric condition ($M = 3.12, SE = .21$) reported more perceived dissonance than those who viewed the team-centric ($M = 2.73, SE = .21$) and neutral news clips ($M = 1.45, SE = .21$). However, only those in the neutral condition were significantly different than those who viewed the athlete- and team-centric news clips. The athlete- and team-centric conditions were not significantly different from each other. As such, H1 is partially supported.

H2–H3: Effect of Negative Information on Attitude

H2 focused on attitude toward the team. However, data indicate the focus of the news clips did not significantly impact attitude toward the team ($F(2, 146) = .07, p > .05$). Thus, H2 is rejected.

H3 examined the impact on attitude toward the athlete. Here, data indicate the focus of the new clips significantly influenced attitude toward the athlete ($F(2, 146) = 12.01, p < .05$). Tukey post hoc analysis determined that, as predicted, those who viewed the athlete-centric news clip reported a significantly lower attitude toward the athlete (M

= 4.82, $SE = .18$) than those who viewed the team-centric ($M = 5.80$, $SE = .18$) and neutral news clips ($M = 5.98$, $SE = .18$). Meanwhile, team-centric and the neutral conditions were not significantly different from each other. Therefore, H3 is supported.

H4-H5: Effect of Negative Information on Behavioral Intentions

H4 focused on sport spectator consumer behavior. However, data indicate that the focus of the news clips did not significantly impact sport spectator consumer behavior ($F(2, 146) = .40$, $p > .05$). Thus, H4 is rejected.

Finally, H5 focused on the intent to purchase athlete-related apparel. Here, data indicate the focus of the new clips significantly influenced the purchase intention of athlete-related apparel ($F(2, 146) = 4.57$, $p < .05$). Tukey post hoc analysis revealed that those who viewed the athlete-centric news clip reported a significantly lower intent to purchase athlete-related apparel ($M = 1.85$, $SE = .26$) than those who viewed the team-centric ($M = 2.72$, $SE = .26$) and neutral news clips ($M = 2.88$, $SE = .27$). Furthermore, the team-centric and neutral conditions were not significantly different from each other. Therefore, H5 is supported.

H6: Effect of Psychological Connection with Team on Dissonance

Turning to the next set of hypotheses, which focus on the classification of psychological connection to the team, data indicate that these classifications significantly impacted perceived dissonance ($F(3, 145) = 2.68$, $p < .05$). As predicted, Tukey post hoc analysis revealed that those considered Allegiant to the team experienced the least amount of dissonance ($M = 1.46$, $SE = .57$) followed by those considered part of the

Awareness ($M = 1.97$, $SE = .32$), Attraction ($M = 2.33$, $SE = .30$), and Attachment ($M = 2.72$, $SE = .17$) classifications. Thus, H6 is supported.

H7: Effect of Psychological Connection with Team on Attitude

H7_a focused on the impact of psychological connection on attitude toward the team. Data indicate that psychological connection toward the team significantly impacted attitude toward the team ($F(3, 145) = 11.34$, $p < .05$). Tukey post hoc analysis revealed that those considered Allegiant to the team ($M = 5.90$, $SE = .38$) were significantly different from those considered Attached ($M = 4.58$, $SE = .11$), Attracted ($M = 4.39$, $SE = .20$), and Aware of the team ($M = 3.57$, $SE = .21$). Additionally, a Tukey post hoc analysis indicated those in the Attachment and Attraction classifications were both significantly different from those in the Awareness classification. However, the Attachment and Attraction segments were not significantly different from each other. Meanwhile, H7_b examined the impact of psychological connection on attitude toward the athlete. Here, data indicate that psychological connection to the team significantly influenced attitude toward the athlete ($F(3, 145) = 4.39$, $p < .05$). As predicted, those Allegiant to the team ($M = 6.98$, $SE = .47$) indicated a significantly greater positive attitude toward the athlete than those considered Attached ($M = 5.59$, $SE = .14$), Attracted ($M = 5.21$, $SE = .25$), and Aware ($M = 5.19$, $SE = .26$). However, Attachment was not significantly different from either Attraction or Awareness. Attraction and Awareness were not significantly different from each other. Therefore, H7 is supported.

H8-H9: Effect of Psychological Connection with Team on Behavioral Intentions

H8 focused on sport spectator consumer behavior. Data indicate that psychological connection to the team significantly impacted sport spectator consumer behavior ($F(3, 145) = 26.19, p < .05$). Those considered Allegiant to the team ($M = 6.66, SE = .54$) were significantly more likely to engage in sport spectator behavior than those considered Attached ($M = 3.28, SE = .17$), Attracted ($M = 2.29, SE = .29$), and Aware of the team ($M = 1.50, SE = .30$). Additionally, those in the Attachment categorization are significantly more likely to engage in sport spectator consumer behavior than those categorized at the Attraction and Awareness levels. However, Attraction and Awareness were not significantly different from each other. Thus, H8 is supported.

Finally, H9 focused on the intent to purchase athlete-related apparel. Here, data indicate that psychological connection to the team significantly influenced the purchase intention of athlete-related apparel ($F(3, 145) = 20.70, p < .05$). As predicted, those who considered Allegiant to the team ($M = 6.38, SE = .56$) were significantly more likely to purchase athlete-related apparel than those considered Attached ($M = 2.59, SE = .17$), Attracted ($M = 1.91, SE = .30$), and Aware of the team ($M = 1.49, SE = .31$). Furthermore, those considered Attached to the team were significantly more likely to purchase athlete-related apparel than those merely Aware of the team, but not significantly different from those Attracted to the team. Furthermore, the Attraction and Awareness segments were not significantly different from each other. Therefore, H9 is supported.

RQ1: Impact of Psychological Connection with Athlete on Attitude

Turning to the research questions, an analysis of variance was performed between the independent variables (psychological connection to the athlete) and the dependent variables (attitude toward the team, attitude toward the athlete, and sport spectator consumer behavior). RQ1_{a-b} focused on the impact of psychological connection with the athlete on attitude toward (a) the team and (b) the athlete. Data indicate that psychological connection with the athlete significantly influences attitude toward the team ($F(3,145) = 3.06, p < .05$). However, only those categorized at the Allegiance ($M = 5.27, SE = .47$) and Awareness ($M = 3.73, SE = .31$) are significantly different from each other. Allegiance was not significantly different from either Attachment ($M = 4.52, SE = .12$) or Attraction ($M = 4.35, SE = .20$). Furthermore, Attachment was not significantly different from Attraction or Awareness. Attraction and Awareness were also not significantly different from each other.

RQ2: Impact of Psychological Connection with Athlete on Behavioral Intentions

RQ1_b focused on the influence of psychological connection with the athlete on attitude toward the athlete. Here, data indicated psychological connection with the athlete significantly impacted attitude toward the athlete ($F(3,145) = 4.08, p < .05$). Those considered Allegiant to the athlete ($M = 6.97, SE = .54$) had a significantly greater positive attitude toward the athlete than those considered Attracted to ($M = 5.19, SE = .23$) and Aware of the athlete ($M = 4.97, SE = .35$), but was not significantly different from Attachment ($M = 5.63, SE = .14$). Moreover, Attachment was also not significantly

different from Attraction and Awareness. Attraction was not significantly different from Awareness.

Turning to RQ2_{a-b}, which questioned the impact of psychological connection with the athlete on behavior, data indicate that psychological connection with the athlete significantly impacted (a) sport spectator consumer behavior ($F(3,145) = 13.86, p < .05$) and (b) purchase intention of athlete-related apparel ($F(3,145) = 16.14, p < .05$). With regards RQ2_a and sport spectator consumer behavior, those considered Allegiant to the athlete ($M = 6.29, SE = .69$) were significantly different than those considered Attached ($M = 3.21, SE = .17$), Attracted ($M = 2.30, SE = .29$), and Aware ($M = 1.48, SE = .45$). Additionally, those considered Attached to the athlete were also significantly different those considered Attracted to the athlete and those merely Aware of the athlete. However, those Attracted to the athlete were not significantly different from those only Aware of the athlete.

Finally, with regards to purchase intention of athlete-related apparel (RQ2_b), those categorized at the Allegiance level ($M = 6.29, SE = .67$) were significantly different from those categorized at the Attachment ($M = 2.66, SE = .17$), Attraction ($M = 1.83, SE = .28$), and Awareness ($M = 1.11, SE = .44$). Those categorized at the Attachment level were also significantly different from those categorized as Awareness, but not Attraction. Attraction was also not significantly different from the Awareness segment.

STUDY TWO DISCUSSION

Studying the psychological connection of sport consumers is essential in understanding their continued sport involvement and consumer behavior. While the

purpose of study 1 was to determine how team and identification work differently in predicting sport consumer attitudes and behavior, study 2 focused on understanding how sport consumers at different levels of team and athlete identification respond to negative information regarding the team and athlete. Prior to this study, there was a lack of empirical evidence regarding how sport consumers respond to various types of negative information; in this case, team-centric business decisions and athlete-centric scandals. Thus, the first step of this study focused on the impact of team- and athlete- centric negative information. In doing so, it is clear that athlete-centric scandals cause more dissonance in sport consumers than team-centric business decisions. This aligns with anecdotal evidence suggesting teams have suffered financial consequences as a result of their athletes' off-the-field behavior. Both the Baltimore Ravens and New England Patriots suffered financial ramifications due to Ray Rice's arrest for domestic violence and Aaron Hernandez's arrest for murder (Hensley, 2015; Rovell, 2014b). The Ravens and Patriots, as well as the other 30 NFL teams, trade and release athletes throughout the year. That is, while team fans may be outspoken and disappointed in team decisions, mass jersey exchanges or contract payouts have yet to occur as a result of these team operations decisions. However, while this study provides evidence suggesting that sport organizations do not need to fear a decline in overall sport spectator behavior stemming from either a business decision or an athlete's off-the-field behavior, the intent to purchase athlete-related apparel was significantly impacted. This aligns with anecdotal evidence of fans demanding to return jerseys and t-shirts after an athlete has been traded (Smith, 2016). Therefore, sport organizations should have a crises management plan in

place, such as allowing exchanges, should a fan-favorite athlete leave the team for any reason. It is also recommended that they temporarily halt all production on any athlete-specific merchandise while an athlete faces legal issues for off-the-field behavior. Should the athlete face jail time or suspension, the sport organization can avoid a surplus of merchandise that will either not sell or be sold at a significantly discounted price.

Once established that negative information impacts sport consumer behavior and attitude to some extent, the second step of this study was to determine how an individual's psychological connection to a team and athlete impacts their response to negative information in terms of attitude and behavior. While this study failed to determine interaction effects between the type of information (athlete-, team-centric, and neutral) and psychological connection with the athlete and athlete, findings revealed main effects for both forms of psychological connection. Thus, psychological connection to the team and athlete significantly impacted perceived dissonance, attitude toward the team and athlete, as well as sport spectator consumer behavior and the intent to purchase athlete-related apparel.

As predicted, those whose psychological connection to the team was classified as Allegiance experienced the least amount of dissonance, followed by those classified as Awareness, Attraction, and Attachment. This confirms Funk and James (2001) description of fans categorized as Allegiance in that they have a stable attitude toward the team. The current study confirms that Allegiant fans have a stable and unwavering commitment to the team regardless of any negative information they encounter involving the team or an athlete on the team. It is also worth noting that those merely Aware of the

team experienced little dissonance as well. This also confirms Funk and James assessment of this segment. This particular group had little interest in the Houston Texans or JJ Watt, and therefore, was not invested in actions of the team or the athlete. Moreover, it seems the group who experienced the most dissonance was Attachment. This contradicts Funk and James (2001) who posited that those at the Attachment stage have a strong attachment and have developed a more stable connection with the sport or team. Funk and James (2001) argue that this attachment stems from individuals in this group investing more time and emotional energy into team activities. Conversely, this could explain why the Attachment segment experienced the most dissonance. Because they have invested time and energy into the team, perhaps they feel betrayed by the team or athlete, whereas those in the Allegiance group may simply disregard the negative information or justify it to minimize their dissonance and maintain balance in their beliefs about the team.

While the current study aligns with prior research suggesting that identification influences an individual's sport-related attitudes and consumption (Fisher, 1998; Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Kwon et al., 2007; Mahony et al., 2002; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995; Wann & Branscombe, 1993), it also serves as a reminder to sport organizations and sport marketing practitioners that while Allegiant fans will stay loyal to the team and athlete in the face of controversy, those classified as Attraction and Attachment may not. It is worth noting that the Attraction and Attachment segments reported significantly lower attitudes and behavioral intentions. Both of the segments include individuals interested in the team or athlete at some level. Therefore, it is recommended that practitioners create crisis

management, as well as marketing campaigns, targeting these groups. They already show an interest in the team or athlete or else they would not have been classified as Attached or Attracted to the team, but the sport organization must take the proper actions to ensure these groups stay interested in the team even after a fan-favorite athlete leaves or is arrested for off-the-field behavior.

While this study confirmed many of the assertions made by Funk and James (2001), it also identified weaknesses in the PCM, specifically how the categorizations are constructed. The largest differences identified were primarily between the Allegiant and Awareness segments. This is understandable because the segments are simply high identification versus low or no identification. However, the Attraction and Attachment segments seemed to act as one larger group rather than two discrete groups. The differences between the Attraction and Attachment segments were minimal and suggested that perhaps there should not be four discrete segments, but three – high, moderate, and low. While this may be a weakness in the PCM, it could also be a result of faulty involvement profiles. The approach used to categorize the four segments was based on previous studies examining the PCM. However, when the approach was adapted specifically for team and athlete identification, the items and subscales seemed weak and lacked the depth and context seen in other identification scales (Mahony et al., 2000; Wann & Branscombe, 1993). While the involvement profile approach may be effective for sport participation studies, it is not suited for studies focusing on team or athlete identification.

Limitations and Future Research

Although the current study yielded insights pertinent to sport organizations and their public relations and marketing staff, the study was not without its limitations. Due to this study's connection to the Psychological Continuum Model, psychological connection to the team and athlete was measured using three subscales (Kyle et al., 2004; Kyle & Mowen, 2005) to create an involvement profile for each level of the PCM. While this approach has been used in past studies (Beaton et al., 2009; Kyle et al., 2004; Kyle & Mowen, 2005) to test the PCM, it has been primarily applied to sport participation and active leisure. Therefore, future research should use additional validated identification measures, such as the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (Wann & Branscombe, 1993) and Psychological Commitment to Team scale (Mahony, Madrigal, & Howard, 2000), to create identification profiles better suited for examining team and athlete identification evenly across groups.

Additionally, future research should investigate the effect of perceived dissonance as a moderator. While the stimuli were successful in creating perceived dissonance, it is possible that perceived dissonance could also function as a moderating variable by changing the magnitude of the relationship between the independent (psychological connection) and dependent variables (attitude and behavior). While study two focused on the creation of dissonance, future research should seek to examine whether it enhances or buffers the effect of the predictor on the outcome.

Chapter 6: Discussion

The sport industry is a multi-billion dollar global industry driven by enormous consumer demand. In North America alone, the sport market was worth \$60.5 billion in 2014 and is expected to reach \$73.5 billion by 2019 (Heitner, 2015). Much of the growth is attributed to media rights deals, which is expected to surpass gate revenues as the sport industry's largest source of revenue (Heitner, 2015). As prior research has found, highly identified fans will continue to attend games in-person (Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Hill & Green, 2000; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995). However, as sport leagues continue to rely heavily on revenue from media rights deals and offering content on multiple outlets, it is also important to consider the mediated fan experience in an attempt to reach the broader market. Marketing to this greater audience would be simple if all sport consumers fit into one homogeneous group. This, of course, is not the case as sport consumers differ demographically, but also in terms of identification.

Taken together, the studies presented in chapters three and five confirm the impact of team identification on attitude and behavior. However, more importantly, this dissertation also provided empirical evidence and theoretical contributions by focusing on the role of athlete identification as it impacts attitude and behavior. Rather than simply viewing athlete identification as an extension of team identification, this research provides evidence that athlete and team identification function uniquely. That is, an individual can be a fan of a specific athlete, but not be a fan of the athlete's team. By disregarding athlete identification as its own unique construct, the whole picture of sport fandom and its impact on sport-related consumer behavior is not being considered.

Furthermore, this dissertation also contributes to research on the role of identification and the impact of negative information on sport consumer behavior. Study two confirmed individuals categorized at the Allegiance level have a stable attitude toward the team in that they reported the least amount of dissonance after receiving negative information about the team or athlete. However, despite also having an association with the team (albeit not as strong as those in the Allegiance segment), those categorized at the Attachment and Attraction levels reported feeling the most dissonance.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

The major implications for this research applies to sport marketers and involves ways increase sport-related consumer behavior and the impact marketing teams could have on increasing game attendance, team- and athlete-related merchandise purchases, and tuning into games through various media platforms. As commercially-oriented organizations, sport organizations must understand the audience beyond their most loyal segment in order to grow and maintain their fan base.

Athlete Identification as a Unique Predictor

The current research determined that team and athlete identification function as unique predictors of attitude and behavioral intentions. For example, psychological connection to team significantly predicted sport spectator consumer behavior, but psychological connection to the athlete did not. Therefore, if an individual is a highly identified fan of the sport team, then they will attend games, watch the team on television, and purchase licensed team apparel. However, if an individual highly identifies with a specific athlete on the team, it cannot be assumed that this will drive the

individual to engage in the team-related consumer behaviors. This provides sport organizations with an opportunity to grow their fan base, but will face the challenge of appealing to those fans who identify with a specific athlete instead of the team.

Beyond Allegiance

The purpose of study one was to determine if and how team and athlete identification operate as unique predictors of attitude and behavior. Once that goal was achieved, study two focused on how individuals at different levels of team and athlete identification (e.g. Allegiance, Attachment, Attraction, and Awareness) respond to negative information about the team and athlete. Study two confirmed that those at the Allegiance level had a stable attitude toward the team – even when faced with negative information. However, because sport teams are commercially-driven organizations dependent on fans for financial success, sport teams should think beyond their most allegiant fans. While Allegiant fans will remain loyal to the team regardless of the circumstance, other segments of fans may not. According to Funk and James (2001), individuals at the Attachment level have also formed a stable psychological connection to the team. However, this segment reported feeling the most dissonance after receiving negative information. Similarly, those at the Attraction level have also developed an attitude or distinct interest towards the team. Though the psychological connection at the Attraction level may not have the same magnitude when compared to Allegiance or Attachment, the individual in this group have expressed an interest in the team. However, this group also reported feeling discomfort after receiving negative information – second to the Attachment segment. Therefore, when faced a sport organization is faced with

controversy – whether team- or athlete-centric – sport organizations must be prepared to conduct damage control, specifically targeting these two segments. As such, it is recommended that sport marketers create a crisis management plan that places more focus on the lower tiers of fans rather than the Allegiant segment since the Allegiant fans are the least likely to abandon the team or decrease their sport consumer behavior.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Factors Contributing to Athlete Identification

In an attempt to better understand the influence of athlete identification on sport-related consumer behavior, future research should focus on identifying factors that contribute to high identification with an athlete. Sport marketers and researchers should seek to understand what attracts an individual to a particular athlete, but not the collective team. Potential factors could be geographic in nature (e.g. athlete's hometown or state), affiliation-based (e.g. athlete's alma mater), performance-based (e.g. athlete's performance on the field, athlete's contribution to the team's overall success, athlete's playing time), community activity (e.g. participation in area activities), goodwill (e.g. association with and contribution to charitable organizations), social media activity (e.g. frequency and types of posts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat), or media personality (e.g. trustworthy, authentic, sense of humor). Understanding what contributes to athlete identification can help inform the creation of future campaigns that can appeal to a broader audience.

Dissonance as a Moderator

Future research should continue to investigate the effect of perceived dissonance on attitudes and behaviors, specifically as it functions as a moderator. While the stimuli in the current study were successful in creating perceived dissonance, it is possible that perceived dissonance could also function as a moderating variable by changing the magnitude of the relationship between the independent (psychological connection) and dependent variables (attitude and behavior). While study two focused on the creation of dissonance, future research should seek to examine whether it enhances or buffers the effect of the predictor on the outcome.

Message Framing

While sport marketers cannot control how audiences interpret their messages, they can frame their messages in a way that best represents and enhances the team's image. Framing theory refers to how the media packages and presents information to the public. According to the theory, the media highlights certain events and then places them within a particular context to encourage or discourage certain interpretations. As a result, the media exercises a selective influence over how people view reality. Therefore, framing is both a macro level and a micro level construct (Scheufele, 1999). As a macro level construct, framing refers to modes of presentation that the media use to present information in a way that resonates among their audience (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Framing is a necessary tool used by media practitioners to reduce the complexity of an issue (Gans, 1979). Thus, frames are valuable tools when presenting relatively complex issues efficiently and in a way that makes them more accessible to audiences because

they play to existing cognitive schemas. In contrast, as a micro construct, framing refers to how people use information and presentation features regarding issues as they form impressions (Scheufele, 1999).

Framing theory is often used when planning media campaigns and utilized by practitioners to tailor issues for specific audiences. In this particular application, sport marketers may use frames to tailor messages to fans regarding negative information involving particular players or team decisions. For example, if an athlete runs into trouble off-the-field, the team's media relations staff will spin it in a positive light for the team. Thus, future research should examine message framing to determine the most efficient way for sport organizations to deliver negative information with the least consequences.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

The current studies focused primarily on sport spectator consumer behavior (e.g. game attendance, watching a game on television, purchasing team apparel, and talk about the team with others) and purchase intention of athlete-related apparel. However, future research should incorporate team and athlete trustworthiness and credibility to determine if there is a spillover effect caused by either entity on the other and whether this was a result of the team- or athlete-centric situations. For example, if an athlete admits to using performance-enhancing drugs, the sport consumer may believe that the sport team condones the use of such drugs. Future research could also examine if athletes with troubled pasts cause a spillover effect when they join a new team. While there is no empirical evidence to confirm the occurrence of a spillover effect in this situation, anecdotal evidence appears to be mixed (Guerra, 2015).

Taken together, the possible next steps would provide a more complete picture of how and when team and athlete identification influence sport-related consumer behavior, as well as to what degree does dissonance impact attitude and behavior. Understanding how and why team and athlete identification differ opens possibilities for investigating media effects that complement or possibly contradict what is already known about sport fan behavior.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

By recognizing gaps in the existing literature along with the need for a more comprehensive understanding of sport consumer identification and behavior, this study extends the Psychological Continuum Model by applying it to a novel context – athletes. In doing so, the current studies ascertained that athlete and team identification are unique concepts and impact sport-related attitudes and consumer behavior in different ways. Furthermore, athlete and team identification also influenced how individuals respond to negative information involving the athlete and team. In light of the studies potential to inform future marketing campaigns and crisis management plans, future efforts may seek to replicate this study in different contexts, address methodological limitations, and continue to extend theory by further exploration of athlete and team identification.

Appendix A: Study One Items

Concept	Measure
Psychological Connection with Team (1-7 scale)	<i>On a scale of 1 to 7, please indicate your agreement with the following statements.</i>
	I like the (sport team).
	I find being a fan of the (sport team) pleasurable.
	I enjoy the (sport team).
	Participating in activities involving the (sport team) are one of the most enjoyable things that I do.
	The (sport team) are important to me.
	The (sport team) interest me.
	You can tell a lot about a person by how they act as a fan of the (sport team).
	When I watch the (sport team), I can really be myself.
	Being a fan of the (sport team) gives others a glimpse of the type of person I am.
	When I participate in activities involving the (sport team), others see me the way I want them to see me.
	A lot of my life is organized around the (sport team).
	Being a fan of the (sport team) has a central role in my life.
	A lot of my time is organized around being a fan of the (sport team).
	$M = 5.00$
	$SD = 1.01$
	$\alpha = .91$
Psychological Connection with Athlete (1-7 scale)	<i>On a scale of 1 to 7, please indicate your agreement with the following statements.</i>
	I like (athlete).
	I find being a fan of (athlete) pleasurable.
	I enjoy (athlete).
	(Athlete) is important to me.
	(Athlete) interests me.
	Participating in activities involving (athlete) are one of the most enjoyable things that I do.

	You can tell a lot about a person by how they act as a fan of (athlete).		
	When I watch (athlete), I can really be myself.		
	Being a fan of (athlete) gives others a glimpse of the type of person I am.		
	When I participate in activities involving (athlete), others see me the way I want them to see me.		
	A lot of my life is organized around (athlete).		
	Being a fan of (athlete) has a central role in my life.		
	A lot of my time is organized around being a fan of (athlete).		
		$M =$	4.47
		$SD =$	1.10
		$\alpha =$.93
Attitude toward the Team (1-7 scale)	<i>On a scale of 1-7, how would you rate the (sport team) on the following:</i>		
	Professional ability		
	Reputation		
	General impression		
	Trust		
	Likability		
		$M =$	5.72
		$SD =$	1.25
		$\alpha =$.94
Attitude toward the Athlete (1-7 scale)	<i>On a scale of 1-7, how would you rate the (athlete) on the following:</i>		
	Professional ability		
	Reputation		
	General impression		
	Trust		
	Likability		
		$M =$	5.93
		$SD =$	1.09
		$\alpha =$.92
Sport Spectator	<i>On a scale of 1 to 7, please indicate your agreement with the following statements.</i>		

Behavioral Intention (1-7 scale)	I will attend the (sport team) games in-person.		
	I will tune into the (sport team) games through television, radio, the internet, or other media.		
	I will purchase the (sport team) licensed merchandise.		
	I will talk with others about my association with the (sport team).		
		<i>M</i> =	5.62
		<i>SD</i> =	1.14
		<i>α</i> =	.77
Purchase Intention of Athlete-related Apparel (1-7 scale)	<i>Please indicate how likely it is that you will purchase (athlete)-related apparel.</i>		
	Unlikely : Likely		
	Probably not : Probably		
	Uncertain : Certain		
	Definitely would not : Definitely would		
		<i>M</i> =	4.54
		<i>SD</i> =	2.01
		<i>α</i> =	.98

Appendix B: Team-Centric Script

(ON CAM)

This story developing right now –
The Houston Texans have release JJ Watt.

(VOICEOVER)

If you remember – last year – Watt restructured his 100 million dollar contract with the team.

The change – which turned his ten million dollar roster bonus into a signing bonus – helped the Texans create the additional cap space needed to sign additional players for the upcoming season.

In 2015, Watt played in all 17 games for the Texans and led the league in sacks, quarterback hits, and tackles for loss.

(ON CAM)

The Texans and Watt have yet to comment on what led to the release of the three time defensive player of the year – but we will continue to follow this story as more information becomes available.

We'll be right back after the break.

(FADE TO BLACK)

Appendix C: Athlete-Centric Script

(ON CAM)

This story developing right now –
Houston Texans defensive end JJ Watt has admitted to using human growth hormone –
commonly known as HGH.

(VOICEOVER)

The confession comes on the heels of an NFL investigation into claims made by Al Jazeera television that Watt – as well as other high profile athletes – received shipments of HGH.

Under the current NFL policy, players who test positive for HGH can be suspended for a minimum of four games for the first offense.

This means the three time defensive player of the year would miss the start of the 2016 season.

(ON CAM)

In 2015, Watt played in all 17 games for the Texans and led the league in sacks, quarterback hits, and tackles for loss.

We'll continue to update you on this story as more information becomes available.
We'll be right back after the break.

(FADE TO BLACK)

Appendix D: Neutral Script

(ON CAM)

The Houston Texans announced this morning that they have signed defensive end JJ Watt to another six year contract extension.

(VOICEOVER)

An NFL media insider reported that Watt's deal is worth 100 million dollars with 50 million in guarantees.

Watt could have earned more money elsewhere, but claims he wanted to stay in Houston. Last year, Watt restructured his contract with the Texans to turn his ten million dollar roster bonus into a signing bonus.

This change created the additional cap space needed to sign addition players for the upcoming season.

(ON CAM)

In 2015, Watt played in all 17 games for the Texans and led the league in sacks, quarterback hits, and tackles for loss.

We'll be right back after the break.

(FADE TO BLACK)

Appendix E: Experiment Script

Participant enters the lab and is escorted to an Experimental Room. The confederate will also be escorted and placed in one of the Experimental Rooms.

Participant will take the pretest on a computer in the Experimental Room.

MANIPULATION ONE

Researcher: Hello – I would like to thank you all for coming in today to help with this research. As you may have noticed through the pre-test, we have had a slight change based on a recent sporting news event that occurred overnight.

Confederate: Does this have to do with JJ Watt?

Researcher: Yes

Confederate: Yep, I heard about it on the news and then read a story on ESPN.

MANIPULATION TWO

Researcher: OK --- no spoilers. For the next part of the research, I would like you to review a news clip from this morning and afterwards I will be asking you a few questions through the survey you started earlier.

(Participants are shown the clip)

Confederate: Oh, yea...I saw that this morning when I was getting ready!

Researcher: Yea...okay, so now you will be escorted back to your rooms to complete the rest of the survey.

(Participant are escorted back to rooms)

DEBRIEF

Researcher: First, I wanted to ask you if you know the purpose of this research.

(Participant responds)

Researcher: I wanted to let you know that there was deception in this study. First, JJ Watt was NOT involved in (Scenario). In fact, the newscast you watched was created weeks ago. We are interested in how people respond to a sports crisis. Do you have any questions?

(Participant responds)

Researcher: The deception component to this study is very important, and I would ask that you do not tell anyone about this research until the study is completed in 4 weeks. Does this sound reasonable?

Thanks again for your participation.

Appendix F: Study Two Items

Concept	Measure
Psychological Connection with Team (1-7 scale)	<i>On a scale of 1 to 7, please indicate your agreement with the following statements.</i>
	Pleasure Subscale
	I like the Houston Texans.
	I find being a fan of the Houston Texans pleasurable.
	I enjoy the Houston Texans.
	$M = 4.05$
	$SD = 1.62$
	$\alpha = .95$
	Sign Subscale
	You can tell a lot about a person by how they act as a fan of the Houston Texans.
	When I watch the Houston Texans, I can really be myself.
	Being a fan of the Houston Texans gives others a glimpse of the type of person I am.
	$M = 3.32$
	$SD = 1.32$
	$\alpha = .76$
	Centrality Subscale
	A lot of my life is organized around the Houston Texans.
	Being a fan of the Houston Texans has a central role in my life.
	A lot of my time is organized around being a fan of the Houston Texans.
	$M = 1.80$
	$SD = 1.19$
	$\alpha = .76$
Psychological Connection with Athlete (1-7 scale)	<i>On a scale of 1 to 7, please indicate your agreement with the following statements.</i>
	Pleasure Subscale
	I like JJ Watt.
	I find being a fan of JJ Watt pleasurable.
	I enjoy JJ Watt.
	$M = 4.79$
	$SD = 1.55$

		$\alpha =$.96
Perceived Dissonance (1-7 scale)	Sign Subscale		
	You can tell a lot about a person by how they act as a fan of JJ Watt.		
	When I watch JJ Watt, I can really be myself.		
	Being a fan of JJ Watt gives others a glimpse of the type of person I am.		
		$M =$	3.32
		$SD =$	1.39
		$\alpha =$.81
	Centrality Subscale		
	A lot of my life is organized around JJ Watt.		
	Being a fan of JJ Watt has a central role in my life.		
	A lot of my time is organized around being a fan of JJ Watt.		
		$M =$	1.69
		$SD =$	1.06
		$\alpha =$.98
	Please indicate the degree to which the news clip caused you to feel:		
	Uncomfortable		
	Uneasy		
	Bothered		
		$M =$	2.45
		$SD =$	1.63
		$\alpha =$.91
Attitude toward the Team (1-7 scale)	<i>On a scale of 1-7, how would you rate the Houston Texans on the following:</i>		
	Professional ability		
	Reputation		
	General impression		
	Trust		
	Likability		
		$M =$	4.44
		$SD =$	1.17
		$\alpha =$.91
Attitude	<i>On a scale of 1-7, how would you rate JJ Watt on the following:</i>		

toward the Athlete (1-7 scale)	Professional ability		
	Reputation		
	General impression		
	Trust		
	Likability		
		<i>M</i> =	5.52
		<i>SD</i> =	1.37
		<i>α</i> =	.92
<hr/>			
Sport Spectator Consumer Behavior (1-7 scale)	<i>On a scale of 1 to 7, please indicate your agreement with the following statements.</i>		
	I will attend the Houston Texans games in-person.		
	I will tune into the Houston Texans games through television, radio, the internet, or other media.		
	I will purchase the Houston Texans licensed merchandise.		
	I will talk with others about my association with the Houston Texans.		
		<i>M</i> =	2.97
		<i>SD</i> =	1.89
		<i>α</i> =	.95
<hr/>			
Purchase Intention of Athlete-related Apparel (1-7 scale)	<i>Please indicate how likely it is that you will purchase JJ Watt-related apparel.</i>		
	Unlikely : Likely		
	Probably not : Probably		
	Uncertain : Certain		
	Definitely would not : Definitely would		
		<i>M</i> =	2.47
		<i>SD</i> =	1.88
		<i>α</i> =	.93

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